THE COMING OF THE MONGOLS

Edited by **David O. Morgan**
and **Sarah Stewart**

I.B. TAURIS

The Coming of the Mongols

This volume is dedicated to

David Bivar
(1926–2015)

Werner Sundermann
(1935–2012)

Iradj Afshar
(1925–2011)

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The Idea of Iran

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Introduction

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The Seljuq Turks had had a major impact on Iran. They ruled most of what is now Iran, Iraq and Turkey, as well as adjacent parts of Afghanistan and Central Asia, for over a century. Their empire is conventionally dated from the battle in which Toghril Beg defeated the Ghaznavids in Khorasan in 1040; or perhaps from his entry into Baghdad in 1055; and in what is now Turkey, from the Seljuq victory over the Byzantines in 1071. As for its ending, the major landmark is the death of the last Great Seljuq sultan, Sanjar, in 1157, though the Seljuqs in Iraq did not finally disappear until 1194; and in Anatolia, Seljuq rule – ultimately under Mongol suzerainty – endured, at least in theory, until the early fourteenth century. There has been a tendency to date Seljuq 'decline' from the death of Sultan Malikshah in 1092. But this suggests an excessive reliance on hindsight. It is true that there were, after 1092 (as indeed before) disputed successions within the royal family, and that Sanjar, though for most of his reign, from 1118, generally recognised as supreme sultan, did not effectively rule in the western Seljuq lands. But it should be remembered that his rule in Khorasan lasted for 60 years, and that for much of that time he was a distinctly effective monarch. Excessive attention to the fact that, in Iraq, there were nine Seljuq sultans between 1118 and 1194 has tended to obscure the fact that in the very extensive eastern lands, Sanjar's rule provided a long period of considerable stability, despite his endless struggles to limit the depredations of the unruly Ghuzz Turks from Central Asia.

Elsewhere, however, things were changing. The lack of real Seljuq control in Iraq made it possible, for the first time in many years, for the Abbasid Caliphs to reassert the power they had lost to secular monarchs: Seljuq officials were expelled from Baghdad in 1152. Real power was exercised by the Abbasids particularly during the long reign of the Caliph al-Nasir (1180–1225). Iran saw another religious entity making itself felt during this period: the Nizari Isma'ili Imamate. This, a splinter from the Shi'i Isma'ili Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo, was not a major territorial state, but it was able to punch above its weight because of its unusual approach to warfare: the sending of individuals or small groups of devotees to murder those at the head of the Ismai'ilis' enemies, rather than facing their armies in battle.

The Seljuq approach to government was to prove remarkably durable, aspects of it surviving into the nineteenth century. One characteristic feature was the *iqta'*, a means, among other things, of arranging the machinery of provincial government. A province might be assigned to a notable Turk as governor, this being termed an *iqta'*. It was revocable at the will of the sultan, and did not, therefore, necessarily involve a reduction in the sultan's power while the central government was strong. But as it became weaker, *iqta'*s tended to become hereditary, provoking a drift towards some measure of independence in some provinces. Once central Seljuq government in Khorasan had collapsed after the death of Sanjar in 1157, it was the descendants of an *iqta'*-holder who contrived to become their principal successors in that part of their erstwhile empire: the rulers of Khwarazm, a very fertile province in the north, where the Amu-Darya river flows into the Aral Sea.

But before that had occurred, a startling new power had come on to the scene in Sanjar's later years. In 1125, the Liao dynasty, which had ruled Mongolia and north China since 907, was evicted by new conquerors from Manchuria, who ascended to the throne in north China as the Chin dynasty: it survived until succumbing to Mongol conquest in 1234. A Liao group of the formerly ruling Khitan people, refusing to submit, headed westward and set up a new empire in Central Asia. This was called Qara Khitai (though to the Chinese it was Western Liao). Among the areas conquered and incorporated by the Khitans was Transoxania. The Khitan ruling class were Buddhists, while Transoxania was of course Muslim. The Khitans met Sanjar in battle, and defeated him, at the Qatvan steppe, near Samarqand, in 1141 – an encounter which may have had something to do with the origin of the European legend of Prester John, the great Christian king in remotest Asia who was thought to be hastening to the rescue of Christians menaced by the Muslims (the Khitans were not in fact Christians, but it was at least clear they were not Muslim; and Christian Europe knew nothing of the existence of Buddhists). Qara Khitai was by and large a tolerant entity: no attempt was made to discriminate against its Muslim subjects, and it allowed a good measure of local autonomy.

A further player in the game of post-Seljuq politics was the Ghurid Sultanate. The Ghurids had originated in the inaccessible centre of Afghanistan, where even the great Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud (d. 1030) had been unable to subdue them. In 1186 they destroyed what remained of Ghaznavid rule in eastern Afghanistan and northern India; and subsequently, when obliged by the forces of Khwarazm to withdraw to their Indian lands, some of their generals were able, in the thirteenth century, to establish an enduring polity, the Delhi Sultanate.

After Sanjar's death, then, political power in the Iranian region had become very divided. It is true that the empire of the Khwarazm-shahs eventually became much the most extensive and impressive-looking power. Under the Khwarazm-shah 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad II, who came to the throne in 1200,

the empire eventually encompassed most of Iran, plus Transoxania, from which the Qara Khitai (to whom earlier Khwarazm-shahs had acknowledged their submission) were evicted in 1215. Similarly, as we have seen, the Shah was able to take over the Afghan lands of the Ghorids. But this extensive imperial strength was much more apparent than real. The Khwarazm-shah's empire was riven with internal disputes – not least, he was on particularly bad terms with his mother, a princess of great influence in her own right. And he was in conflict with the Caliph al-Nasir. This, and the breach it opened up with the Sunni religious classes, created a hazardous question of legitimacy so far as the ruler of a recently founded polity was concerned.

Politically, then, Iran was in a state of considerable vulnerability at just the wrong moment: when the Mongols under Chinggis Khan were beginning their military campaigns of expansion in the early decades of the thirteenth century. Sanjar, at the height of his power, might have effectively resisted a Mongol-like assault: after all, his rule survived defeat by the Khitans for a further 16 years after 1141. But the Khwarazm-shah's empire fell to the Mongols very easily indeed. We sometimes think that the Mongols were the practitioners of some sort of proto-blitzkrieg, in that Chinggis Khan's conquest of Central Asia and Iran was accomplished so quickly and, apparently, faced very little effective resistance. But this was peculiar to Chinggis's western campaigns. The Mongol conquest of China – certainly much more important, in Mongol eyes, than the Middle East - was no blitzkrieg: it took them 70 years. Iran, because of what had happened there after the ending of Seljuq rule, was an easy target.

It should be emphasised, though, that political instability and disintegration by no means resulted in cultural decay. Rather, indeed, the opposite. But history makes it clear that political stability is not a necessary precondition for cultural efflorescence, Renaissance Italy being the most conspicuous example; and the so-called Timurid Renaissance is another. The period we are examining saw the lifetimes of some of the most important literary figures in the whole of Iranian history, such as Anvari, Khaqani, Nezami, Attar, and Sa'di. Great poets, like other people, may well prefer to live in a time of peace and quiet. But perhaps societal turbulence such as Iran experienced in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries provides its own stimulus to cultural creativity.

The Anushteginid Khwarazm-Shahs:
Gentle Ascent and Catastrophic Decline

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Khwarazm, the classical Chorasmia, lies on the lower reaches of the Amu Darya or Oxus river in Central Asia, essentially coming within the northwestern part of the present-day Uzbek Republic. Chorasmia was a land of ancient civilisation, known to us from archaeological excavations by Soviet and subsequent Russian scholars to have dated from the Neolithic of the late third millennium BCE. Although surrounded by deserts, it was a region of flourishing agriculture based on a network of irrigation canals taken off the Oxus, thereby permitting intensive cultivation and stock rearing. Its name appears in the Avesta, and around the beginning of the first millennium BCE. It seems to have come within the steppe empire of the Scythians or Saka. Until recently, it was generally thought to have been the homeland of the prophet Zoroaster, though this is now disputed.

Chorasmia became part of the greater Iranian world. It was conquered by the Achaemenid Cyrus the Great, together with other lands of Central Asia, in the mid-sixth century BCE, and is mentioned in the Bisutun inscription as one of the 23 lands that Darius I had inherited from his predecessors. Another inscription, one of Darius, records Chorasmia as a source of the turquoises used to embellish his palace at Susa. Chorasmians appear as tribute bearers on the relief of the eastern staircase of the Apadana at Persepolis. The king of the Chorasmians, Pharasmanes, concluded a treaty of friendship with Alexander the Great in c. 328 BCE. Chorasmian coins are known from the turn of the first century BCE, based on Graeco-Bactrian patterns, and Chorasmia acquired its own era, one derived from the Zoroastrian calendar, in the thirties of the first century CE subsequently reformed, according to the native scholar Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, in the fourth/tenth century by the Khwarazm-shahs of the Banu 'Iraq.[1] It already had its own Middle Iranian language, Khwarazmian, whose early stages are known fragmentarily from coin inscriptions and from documents on wood and parchment from c. 200 CE, and which was written, like Sogdian and other languages of Inner Asia as far afield as that of the first Türk empire in Mongolia, in a script ultimately derived from the Aramaic alphabet. Khwarazmian lasted as the local language of the region for several

centuries after the Islamic conquest of Khwarazm, being quite well known to modern linguists from glosses in the Arabic dictionary, the *Muqaddimat al-adab*, of the sixth-century AH (twelfth century CE) Khwarazmian grammarian and lexicographer al-Zamakhshari, and from sentences concerning legal cases in some Arabic law books. But by the fourteenth century, with the increased ethnic turcicisation of Khwarazm, the language died out, to be replaced essentially by Turkish, the forerunner of modern Uzbek.[2]

The history of Khwarazm in early Islamic times is only fragmentarily known. The conquest by Qutayba b. Muslim al-Bahili in 93 AH (713 CE), when the Arab commander intervened in a succession dispute there, was a momentary event only, since the islamisation of what had previously been a Zoroastrian land did not get under way until a century or so later. The title of Khwarazm-shah now appears in history for a line which al-Biruni called the Afrighids, giving a list of 22 rulers spanning 690 years; however, their names, presumably Middle Iranian ones, are far from clear and have obviously suffered from the deformations of scribes who knew only Arabic or New Persian and were trying to cope with what were, to them, alien, incomprehensible names.[3] These so-called Afrighids may in fact have comprised more than one distinct family or dynasty. We have clearer knowledge of the last of these Shahs, those of the tenth century CE, distinguished as the Banu 'Iraq, by this time fully Islamised and bearing Islamic names, who ruled from Kath, the ancient capital of the region situated on the right bank of the Oxus. It seems that these Banu 'Iraq were in a treaty relationship with the Samanid amirs of Transoxania and Khurasan, as nominally their tributaries although in practice largely independent.[4]

The last indigenous Iranian line to rule in Khwarazm as Shahs was that of the short-lived Ma'munid family, whose appearance at the end of the tenth century CE, replacing the Banu 'Iraq, seems to have been connected with the rise of the city of Gurganj, said to be the ancient rival of Kath. Situated in the northwestern part of Khwarazm and on the left-bank region of the Oxus, Gurganj flourished as the setting-off point for caravans travelling through the Oghuz steppes of Inner Eurasia across the Emba and Ural rivers to Khazaria on the lower Volga and to Bulghar on the middle stretches of the river, the route which we know was followed in the early tenth century CE by the Arab emissary Ahmad b. Fadlan, sent by the Abbasid caliph in Muslim Baghdad to the newly converted king of Bulghar. The ruinous site of mediaeval Gurganj is the modern Kunya Ürgench, just over the border from what is now the Uzbek Republic and just within the Turkmen one. After less than 30 years in power, the Ma'munid Shahs were brutally overthrown by an army sent against Khwarazm by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, who was at this time building up a powerful military empire which at this death in 421 AH (1030 CE) was to stretch from northwestern Iran to the Panjab and Indus river in the east. This violent event was a turning-point in the history of Khwarazm in that its rulers

were henceforth, for some nine centuries until in 1920 the incoming Bolsheviks suppressed the khanate of Khiva, to be Turks and Mongols and not Iranians, with incoming Turkish nomads gradually transforming the ethnic complexion of Khwarazm from that of an Iranian to a Turkish land.[5]

The ancient title of Khwarazm-shah was, however, perpetuated when the victorious Mahmud entrusted what now became a province of the Ghaznavid Empire to one of his commanders, Altuntash, a former ghulam or slave soldier of his father Sebüktegin, who was now, as governor, given the traditional designation. But Ghaznavid rule in what was a very peripheral and, as it was to prove, hardly defensible outpost of the empire, turned out to be brief. Altuntash was killed in a battle of 423 AH (1032 CE) with the rising power of the Turkish Qarakhanids, who early in the fifth/eleventh century established themselves north of the Oxus in the Semirechye and Transoxiana and what became known as eastern Turkestan, the modern Chinese province of Sinkiang. Altuntash's sons clung on in Khwarazm for a few years longer, but were overwhelmed by the rising power of the Seljuq Turks from the Oghuz tribe; in 432 AH (1041 CE) and the succeeding years, the Seljuqs took over Khwarazm and Khurasan, pushed back the Ghaznavids into eastern Afghanistan and northwestern India, and at the same time drove westwards across northern Iran to found the Great Seljuq Empire based on such centres as Ray, Isfahan and Hamadan.[6]

As a province of the new empire, Khwarazm was now placed by the Seljuq sultans under the governorship of various of their Turkish slave commanders. Amongst other things, Khwarazm now became a springboard for punitive expeditions launched by the sultans against the still largely pagan Turks in the Oghuz and Qïpchaq steppes north of Khwarazm. The title Khwarazm-shah lapsed temporarily but was revived in the later decades of the fifth century AH (eleventh century CE). One of the ghulam amirs appointed there by the Seljuq sultan Malik Shah was Anushtegin Gharcha'i, [7]whose son was to inaugurate what became an hereditary line of Khwarazm-shahs, at first purely as governors and representatives for the Seljuqs in western Iran and Iraq, but after the mid-sixth/twelfth century and the demise of Great Seljuq authority in the east, as independent rulers. These Shahs of Anushtegin's line remained all through their period of power Turkish in ethnos, with their names and titulature a mixture of the Turkish and the Islamic, although increasingly permeated by Perso-Arabic Islamic culture (see below).[8] They became major players on the Iranian and Central Asian scenes, building up an impressive empire which proved, however, evanescent and was to go down, after some 130 years' rule in Khwarazm and adjacent lands, before the unstoppable onslaught of the Mongols.

Anushtegin, whom Kafesoglu surmised was from the Chigil or Khalaj tribes, was Sultan Malik Shah's *tasht-dar* or keeper of the royal washing bowls. According to Juwayni, it was customary for the revenues of Khwarazm to support this office of the Seljuq court, so that Anushtegin bore the designation

of *shihna* or military governor of Khwarazm.[9] After Anushtegin's death, another Turkish ghulam governor, Ekinchi b. Qochqar, succeeded briefly in Khwarazm, and then in 490 AH (1097 CE) Anushtegin's son Qutb al-Din Muhammad was appointed there. He functioned as the faithful vassal of the Seljuq sultan Sanjar, who was governor of Khurasan and the east from the 1090s under the supreme sultans, his two brothers Berk-yaruq and Muhammad; after the latter's death in 511 AH (1111 CE), Sanjar regarded himself as the senior member of the dynasty and behaved as unfettered ruler in the empire's eastern lands for the next 40 years or so. Qutb al-Din Muhammad was assiduous in attendance at Sanjar's court at Merv, and on occasion sent military contingents to Sanjar's army, such as in 51 AH (1119 CE) when Sanjar invaded northern Iran and defeated at Saveh his recalcitrant nephew, the Great Seljuq sultan Mahmud b, Muhammad.

Qutb al-Din Muhammad's son 'Ala' al-Din Atsïz became Khwarazm-shah on his father's death in 521 or 522 AH (1127 or 1128 CE); he was to reign for almost 40 years and to be the real founder of the Anusheginids' military achievements. Atsïz inherited his father's reputation as a faithful servant of the Seljuqs, remaining nominally a vassal of Sanjar's to the end and praised by Juwayni for his exploits in the Seljuq's service. Thus he accompanied Sanjar on his Transoxanian campaign of 524 AH (1130 CE) aimed at bolstering the faltering authority of the Qarkhanid Arslan Khan Muhammad, who had earlier been placed on his throne at Samarqand by Sanjar, and likewise led a contingent of Khwarazmian troops when in 52 AH (1135 CE) the sultan marched against Ghazna to bring to heel his rebellious vassal, the Ghaznavid Bahram Shah.[10]

Despite such diligence in the service of the Seljuqs, Atsïz embarked increasingly on policies of greater independence from his suzerain and of enlarging his territories beyond the constricting boundaries of Khwarazm, feeling his way between the two neighbouring great powers of the Qarakhanid and Seljuqs, and thereby becoming a significant force in the eastern Islamic world. A perennial task of all rulers in Khwarazm was maintaining the borders of the realm, since these were lengthy, and exposed and lacking natural protective boundaries against pressures from the Turks of the surrounding steppe lands. Already during his father Qutb al-Din Muhammad's lifetime, Atsïz had led expeditions against the Turks of the region between the Aral Sea on the northern fringes of Khwarazm and the Mangïshlaq peninsula to the east of the Caspian, an important concentration point for nomads; the geographer Yaqut cites Arabic verses by a local poet of Khwarazm concerning one such event and Atsïz's victory there.[11] The Shah also in 527 AH (1133 CE) seized the strategically important town of Jand on the lower Syr Darya. From there he made a foray against the pagan Turks of the Qïpchaq steppe, thereby earning for himself, in Muslim eyes, the title of *Ghazi* or Fighter for the Faith; and he was subsequently able to maintain this position at Jand, against pressure from

the new force in Transoxiana of the incoming Mongol Qara Khitai, by a timely payment to them of an annual tribute in cash and kind.[12]

Atsïz's relations with the Seljuqs now began to grow cold. In 533 AH (1138 CE) he rebelled openly, but Sanjar's army invaded Khwarazm, decisively defeated Atsïz, executing his son Atlïgh, and driving him out of Khwarazm temporarily. Sanjar appointed briefly his nephew Sulayman b. Muhammad b. Malik Shah as his governor there, but the unpopularity and alleged excesses of the Seljuq occupiers in Khwarazm facilitated the return of Atsïz.[13] The arrival of the Gur Khan of the Qara Khitai, a new force in Central Asia, and the defeat by them of the sultan at the battle of the Qatwan Steppe in 536 AH (1141 CE), dealt a crushing blow to Sanjar's prestige. Atsïz seized the opportunity to sack Sanjar's capital of Merv and to secure briefly recognition at Nishapur of his authority.[14] Some sources, such as Ibn al-Athir, accuse Atsïz of deliberately inciting the Qara Khitai to invade Transoxiana, though this seems improbable.[15] The Khwarazm-shah's real opportunity came when the rebellious Oghuz or Ghuzz tribesmen captured Sanjar in 548 AH (1153 CE) and held him a virtual prisoner for three years, although Atsïz acted at this time with comparative restraint. In 548-9 AH (1154 CE) he sent an army into Khurasan as far as Bayhaq, but soon afterwards returned to Khurasan once more, at the invitation of the Qarakhanid Mahmud Khan, Sanjar's nephew, to quell the Oghuz. Atsïz died at the same time as Sanjar, in 552 AH (1157 CE), still essentially a ruler just in Khurasan and paying tribute now to the Qara Khitai Gur Khan, but the bases for a much more activist and expansionist policy by his successors had been laid.[16]

Before a high-ranking Turkic *ghulām*, Sebük-tigin, rose to power in Ghazni, a The reigns of Atsïz's son Il Arslan and his grandson Tekish filled the remaining decades of the sixth century AH (twelfth century CE), during which the Shahs became, together with the Ghurid sultans (see below), undoubtedly the most powerful Muslim rulers in the eastern Islamic lands. They remained tributaries of the Qara Khitai, but the latter were disposed to leave the Shahs alone provided that the requisite payments were received. At the outset. Il Arslan had friendly relations with Sanjar's designate successor in Khurasan, Mahmud Khan, but in his diplomatic correspondence with the Qarakhanid addressed Mahmud as merely *mukhlis* 'sincere friend', whereas Atsïz had always deprecatingly described himself as Sanjar's 'slave' (*banda*).[17] After 557 AH (1162 CE) Khurasan fell largely into the hands of Turkish amirs competing for authority, and Il Arslan could exert little control there. However, the Khwarazm-shahs long coveted the Qarakhanids' possessions in Transoxania, and the complaisance of the Qara Khitai allowed the Shahs to intervene there, especially as the Qarakhanid rulers were often in conflict with their turbulent Qarluq tribesmen supporters. In 567 AH (1172 CE), Il Arslan's son Tekish secured the throne in Khwarazm, ousting his elder brother and rival Sultan Shah, with Qara Khitai assistance. But he soon rebelled against his overlords

and managed to ward off a Qara Khitai invasion of Khwarazm by the traditional expedient of opening up the irrigation dykes and flooding the land, thereby preventing the Qara Khitai troops from advancing down the Oxus valley into Khwarazm. In 578 AH (1182 CE) Tekish led an expedition against the Qarakhanids of Transoxiana and temporarily occupied Bukhara. Tekish's wife Terken Khatun was from the Qanghlï or Qïpchaq Turks, and this connection enabled Tekish to recruit Qïpchaq tribesmen for his armies. By no means all of these were Muslims, and Khwarazmian troops were later to achieve in the Iranian lands an unenviable reputation for violent and barbarous conduct.[18]

In succeeding years, Tekish continued hostilities against the Gur Khan, but was also much involved in the affairs of northern Khurasan, where a threefold struggle for power there took place over many years. Sultan Shah, after failing to achieve the throne in Khwarazm, eventually took refuge with the Ghurids, but failing to gain active military help from them, then established himself as a third force in the region. By this time, the Ghurids were attempting expansion westwards into Khurasan from their capital at Ghur in central Afghanistan.[19] The Ghurid chief Sayf al-Din Muhammad had been killed in a battle near Merv with the Oghuz of Khurasan in 558 AH (1163 CE) and had been succeeded by his cousins Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad and Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad. These two brothers were now to build up a powerful Ghurid Empire on the eastern fringes of the Islamic world and to begin the permanent establishment of the Islamic faith in northern India, clashing with Sultan Shah in northern Khurasan over several years until Sultan Shah was finally defeated and captured near Merv in 586 AH (1190 CE), dying three years later. The two Ghurid brothers now took over almost all of Khurasan, installing at Merv a fugitive grandson of Tekish, Hindu Khan b. Malik Shah.[20]

In the last decade of his life, Tekish turned to intervening in and expanding into northern Iran, where the last Great Seljuq sultan, Toghrïl b. Arslan, was at odds with both the Abbasid caliph al-Nasir and the Eldigüzid Atabegs of Azerbaijan, In 588 AH (1192 CE) a Khwarazmian army advanced as far as Ray, and two years later Tekish defeated and killed Toghrïl near Ray, thus ending Great Seljuq power in the Iranian lands and enabling the Khwarazm-shah to take over the whole of Jibal as far as Hamadan. The caliph became naturally alarmed, but could do little more than give moral encouragement to the Ghurids – with whom the caliphate had been long in diplomatic and cultural contact -- as bulwarks against further Khwarazmian expansion. On the practical level, al-Nasir had willy-nilly in 591 AH (1195 CE) to invest Tekish with the governorship of Khurasan, northern Iran and Turkestan, and, according to Ibn al-Athir, later received from Tekish a demand that his name should be recognised in the *khutba* at Baghdad. The Khwarazmians remained in northern Iran and in 592 AH (1196 CE) attacked and defeated the caliphal forces, but

when in 596 AH (1200 CE) Tekish died, this was the signal for the people of northern Iran to rise up and massacre the Khwarazmian troops in Jibal.[21]

Tekish left a powerful Khwarazmian state to his son and successor, 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad. At the outset of his reign, the new Shah faced a challenge from the Ghurids in Khurasan. In 600 AH (1204 CE) Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad invaded Khwarazm and almost captured the capital Gurganj itself before he had to retreat and to suffer a military defeat by Qara Khitai forces at Andkhud. Peace was made between the Shah and the sultan, but the Ghurids were by now reduced to holding Herat in Khurasan, and when Mu'izz al-Din died two years later, the transient Ghurid Empire began to fall apart.[22] 'Ala' al-Din could thus safely turn his attention to Transoxiana, to whose authority there of the Qara Khitai he was still theoretically subject. He invaded Transoxiana, and his defeat of the Qara Khitai near Talas was widely publicised throughout the Islamic world as a victory of the true faith against the pagans; 'Ala' al-Din now assumed such titles a 'The Second Alexander' and 'The Shadow of God on Earth'. But a new and ominous power appeared soon afterwards in the Semirechye and the northern fringes of Transoxiana in the shape of the Naiman Mongol Küchlüg, and 'Ala' al-Din was unable to protect the Muslims of those regions from the Mongol's anti-Islamic policies. Chinggis Khan's forces were to overthrow and kill Küchlüg in 615 AH (1218 CE), but this was only postponement of the day of reckoning for the Khwarazm-shahs.[23]

From his successes in Transoxiana and Khurasan, 'Ala' al-Din's prestige was undoubtedly high all through the eastern Islamic world, with his authority recognised even across the Persian Gulf in Oman. He decided to resurrect his father's anti-caliphal policy in the west, having learnt from correspondence captured by him in the archives of the Ghurid centre of Ghazna in 612 AH (1215 CE) that Abbasid al-Nasir had been inciting the Ghurids against him and moreover that the caliph was using Isma'ili assassins against the Shah's officials in Iran. The Isma'ili Imam in Alamut, Jalal al-Din Hasan (III), did in fact send a *fida'i*, assassin, to kill Oglamïsh, the governor over western Iran appointed by 'Ala' al-Din.[24] The Shah adopted – apparently purely for opportunistic reasons – a pro-Shi'ite policy and secured a *fatwa* from tame ulema of his empire denouncing al-Nasir as unfit to rule, removing his name from the *khutba* or Friday sermon in many of the towns of Khurasan and proclaiming an 'Alid *sayyid*, one 'Ala' al-Mulk Tirmidhi, as rival caliph.[25] He began to advance through western Iran against Baghdad. But whilst endeavouring to cross the Zagros mountains during the winter of 614 AH (1217–18 CE), his forces were held up by snowfalls of unparalleled intensity, and these, plus news of unrest amongst the Qïpchaqs and the appearance of the Mongols of Chinggis Khan, the successor to Küchlüg in Semirechye and Kashgharia, at the opposite, eastern end of his realm, compelled the Shah to return to Khurasan. This débâcle was a blow to 'Ala' al-Din's prestige, since it was regarded by orthodox Muslims as a divine punishment for his act of *lèse-*

majesté against the caliph, and this disapproval by Sunni elements was compounded by the Shah's execution in 613 AH (1216 CE) of the Kubrawi *shaykh* Majd al-Din Baghdadi, probably because the *shaykh* was a representative of the orthodox ulema and other elements opposed to his anti-caliphal measures.[26]

The sources are somewhat confused and even contradictory regarding the details of events and the chronology of 'Ala' al-Din's first contacts with the Mongols. It does seem that he provoked them by in 615 AH (1218 CE) allowing his governor at Utrar, on the middle Syr Darya, to attack and plunder merchants who had come, ostensibly in a peaceful manner, from Chinggis's dominions in Mongolia, and by killing envoys sent to him by Chinggis. In retaliation, Chinggis's army advanced into Transoxiana in 616–17 AH (1220 CE) and overran it. The violence of their onslaught was such that 'Ala' al-Din had to retreat into Iran, fleeing to Fars, but saw no hope of making a stand against the Mongols. He doubled back to the Caspian coastlands and died there in wretched circumstances at the end of 617 AH (1220), just before his home province was devastated by the Mongols, with the capital Gurganj so savagely sacked that it never revived.[27]

Khwarazm, Transoxiana and Khurasan were now irretrievably lost to the Shahs. 'Ala' al-Din's son, Jalal al-Din Mengübirti, had been allotted during his father's lifetime the Khurasanian lands conquered from the Ghurids as an appanage. Jalal al-Din is highly praised by Juwayni – despite that historian's need to cosy up to his Mongol masters – as a courageous warrior. As the last of the Anushteginid line, he was only in fact able to rule in Khwarazm very briefly when his father died, just before the Mongols ravaged Gurganj. He retreated into eastern Afghanistan, and at Ghazna assembled an army of Khwarazmians, Ghuris and Turks. With these troops, he inflicted at Parwan a serious defeat on his Mongol pursuers. But this gave him a temporary respite only, and he was forced to retreat into northern India, where he was defeated on the banks of the Indus by the Mongols, narrowly escaping capture. Eventually, in 621–22 AH (1224–25 CE), he moved to western Iran, Azerbaijan and Transcaucasia, where he seized Tabriz from the last Eldigüzid Atabegs and invaded Christian Georgia, sacking Tiflis.[28]

In 624 AH (1227 CE) he reduced the Isma'ilis of Alamut to tributary status,[29] and finally endeavoured to carve out a principality for himself in eastern Anatolia based on Akhlat, which he captured in 627 AH (1230 CE). But he had to flee before a new Mongol army under Chormaghun and was mysteriously killed in a Kurdish village near Amid, dying, as al-Nasawi puts it, 'the death of a victorious lion at the hands of foxes'.[30]

As a vigorous and astute commander, in happier circumstances Jalal al-Din might well have been able to assemble a coalition of Muslim princes of Iran, Iraq and Anatolia to withstand the Mongol hordes, and even conceivably to reconstitute the empire of his forebears, had not local factionalism and

jealousies made this impossible. Jalal al-Din fought a stubborn rearguard action against the hordes from Inner Asia, but at this stage of their onslaught on the Islamic Middle East the Mongols were probably unstoppable. The actual title of Khwarazm-shah was sporadically revived and used informally by various Turco-Mongol and Turkish potentates of Central Asia up the early years of the nineteenth century, when for instance the Ïnaq Iltüzer of Khiva called himself on his (in the event, unissued) coins 'The Heir (*warith*) of the Khwarazm-shahs'.[31] However, it may be asserted that none of these potentates was of more than local importance.

During the 120 years or so of its existence, the state of the Khwarazm-shahs retained its ethnically Turkish core, with continual replenishments of manpower from the adjacent steppes, but culturally and administratively it formed part of the Perso-Islamic world of the Great Seljuqs, the Seljuqs of Rum and the Atabeg principalities of Iraq, Syria, eastern Anatolia and western and southern Iran. What information that we possess about the internal governmental structures of the Shahs' empire stems from documents concerned with the investiture of officials of the *diwan-i a'la* or central bureaucracy like viziers and *wakil*s, the heads of various administrative departments, and with the appointment of provincial governors, etc. As with so many mediaeval Islamic states, we do not possess the originals, but copies of several of hem are contained in collections of letters and *insha'* documents meant as models for secretaries; these include *al-Tawassul ila 'l-tarassul* of Tekish's head of chancery, Baha' al-Din Baghdadi, and three collections of documents, written in both Arabic and Persian and in a highly ornate style, by the famed chief *munshi'* of Atsïz and Il Arslan, Rashid al-Din Watwat.[32]

One point of interest emerging from this material is that just before the end of his reign, 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad divided up the office of vizier into a college, as it were, of six *wakildar*s forming something like a modern governmental cabinet.[33] Barthold characterised the administrative system of the Shahs as essentially similar to that of the Great Seljuqs, with offices like those of the vizier, the *mustawfi* or chief accountant and the chief *qadi* or supreme judge, at its head, but he noted that a Shah like 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad, after alienating the orthodox Sunni religious authorities through his anti-Abbasid policies, had to rely more and more on the military element in the state, that of slave guards and mercenary troops from the steppes and elsewhere. The civilian bureaucracy was downplayed, seen in the division of the vizierate and its duties mentioned above, so that the administrative system which had prevailed in the eastern Islamic lands since the time of the Abbasid caliphate's florescence, was largely abandoned with the growing emphasis on militarism.[34]

The earlier sultans of the Great Seljuq line, probably up to the time of the highly cultured Mahmud b. Muhammad b. Malik Shah (r. 511–25 AH [1118–31 CE]), seem to have been illiterate, certainly in the established Arabic and Persian cultures of their territories. Amongst the Khwarazm-shahs, however,

Atsïz and Il Arslan had Rashid al-Din Watwat, famed as *Dhu 'l-Lisanayn* 'Adept in the Two Tongues', i.e. equally skilled in the Arabic and Persian languages, as their court poet and propagandist, and it was to Atsïz that al-Zamakhshari dedicated his *Muqaddimat al-adab* (see above); the Shah himself was praised by Juwayni and 'Awfi for his own literacy and skill as a poet in Persian.[35]

Notes:

1. al-Biruni, *al-Athar al-baqiya 'an al-qurun al-madiya*, transl. C. Edward Sachau, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations* (London: William H. Allen, 1879), pp. 229–30.
2. Y. A. Rappoport, 'Chorasmia. i. Archaeology and Pre-Islamic History', *EIr* 5 (1991), pp. 511–16, and D. N. MacKenzie, 'Chorasmia. iii. The Chorasmian Language', *EIr* 5 (1992), pp. 517–20.
3. al-Biruni, *al-Athar al-baqiya 'an al-qurun al-madiya*, pp. 41–42.
4. C. E. Sachau, 'Zur Geschichte und Chronologie von Khwârazm', Part I, *SBWAW*, phil.-hist. Cl., vol. 73 (1875), pp. 479–83; M. Fedorov, 'The Khwarazmshahs of the Banu 'Iraq (Fourth/Tenth Century)', *Iran JBIPS* 38, pp. 71–75.
5. C. E. Sachau, 'Zur Geschichte und Chronologie von Khwârazm', Part II, *SBWAW*, phil.-hist. Cl., vol. 74 (1875), pp. 290–301; W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion* (London: E. J. W. Gibbs Memorial Trust, 1968), pp. 275–79; M. Nazim, *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna* (Cambridge: Khalil, 1931), pp. 56–60; C. E. Bosworth, 'Khwarazm-Shahs', *EI*2 4 (1978), p. 1066; C. E. Bosworth, 'Al-e Ma'mun', *EIr* 1 (1985), pp. 762–64; C. E. Bosworth, 'Chorasmia. ii. In Islamic Times', *EIr* 5 (1992), p. 517.
6. C. E. Sachau, 'Zur Geschichte und Chronologie von Khwârazm', Part I, pp. 301–12; C. E. Bosworth, 'The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000–1217)', in John A. Boyle, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran. V. The Saljuq and Mongol Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 51–52; C. E. Bosworth, 'Altuntas', *EIr* 1 (1985), pp. 914–15.
7. The *nisba* being derived from Anushtegin's having been sold in Gharchistan, in what is now northern Afghanistan, to a Seljuq commander; see Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, p. 323.
8. For the list of the Shahs, their names, titles and chronology, see C. E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties, A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 178–80, no. 89.
9. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh* (Beirut, 1385–87/1965–67), vol. 10, pp. 267–68; D. S. Richards, transl., *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks. Selections from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh of 'Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), pp. 292–93; 'Ata-Malik Juwayni, *Tarikh-i Jahan-gushay*, transl. J. A. Boyle as *The History of the World-Conqueror* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 277–78.
10. Juwayni, *History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 1, pp. 278–80; Ibrahim Kafesoglu, *Harezmsahlar devleti tarihi (485–617/1092–1229)* (Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1956), pp. 44ff; C. E. Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World', pp. 142–44; C. E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids, Splendour and Decay. The Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India 1040–1186* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977), pp. 100–01; C. E. Bosworth, 'Atsïz Garca'i', *EIr* 3 (1989), p. 19.
11. *Mu'jam al-buldan* (Beirut, 1375–76 AH/1955–57 CE), vol. 4, pp. 215–16.
12. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 10, p. 268; Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, p. 324; Kafesoglu, *Harezmsahlar devleti tarihi*, p. 46.
13. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 10, p. 67; Juwayni, *History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 1, p. 280; Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 324–25.
14. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, p. 327.
15. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 11, pp. 81–86. For the appearance of the Qara Khitai in the Islamic lands and their victory over Sanjar at the Qatwan Steppe,

see Michal Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History. Between China and the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 35–47.

16. Juwayni, *History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 1, pp. 287–88; Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 329–31; Kafesoglu, *Harezmsahlar devleti tarihi*, pp. 46–49, 65–72; Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World', pp. 144–45, 150.

17. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, p. 332.

18. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 11, p. 375; Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 332ff; Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World', pp. 191–92.

19. See C. E. Bosworth, 'Ghurids', *EIr* 10 (2001).

20. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 12, p. 58; Juwayni, *History of the World-Conqueror*, Vol. 1, pp. 299–301; Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 339ff; Kafesoglu, *Harezmsahlar devleti tarihi*, pp. 147–51; G. Wiet, 'Commentaire historique', in A. Maricq and G. Wiet, *La découverte de la capital des Sultans ghorides (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1959), pp. 37–39; C. E. Bosworth, 'The Ghurids in Khurasan', in A. C. S Peacock and D. G. Tor (eds), *Medieval Central Asia and the Persianate World. Iranian Tradition and Islamic Civilisation* (London & New York: I.B.Tauris), 2015, pp. 210–21.

21. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 12, pp. 106–08, 152–53, 156–58; Juwayni, *The History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 1, pp. 302–15; Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World', pp. 181–83; Angelika Hartmann, *an-Nasir li-Din Allah (1180–1229). Politik, Religion, Kultur in der späten 'Abbasidenzeit* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1975), pp. 72–78; Bosworth, 'Tekish', *EI2* 10 (2000), pp. 414–15.

22. Wiet, 'Commentaire historique', p. 44.

23. Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World', pp. 193–95; Boyle, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, pp. 303ff; Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History*, pp. 70–74.

24. Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 407.

25. Juwayni, *History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 1, pp. 353–54, vol. 2, pp. 390–92; Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, p. 374; Hartmann, *an-Nasir li-Din Allah*, pp. 80–83.

26. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 12, pp. 317–18; al-Nasawi, *Sirat al-Sultan Jalal al-Din Mengübirti*, ed. Hafiz Ahmad Hamdi (Cairo, 1953); p. 64; Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 375–77; Kafesoglu, *Harezmsahlar devleti tarihi*, pp. 214–19.

27. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 12, pp. 369–70, 394–95; al-Nasawi, *Sirat al-Sultan Jalal al-Din Mengübirti*, pp. 104–08, 170–71; Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 393ff; Kafesoglu, *Harezmsahlar devleti tarihi*, pp. 229ff; C. E. Bosworth, ' 'Ala' al-Din Mohammad b. Tekis b. Il-Arslan', *EIr* 1 (1985), pp. 780–81.

28. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 12, pp. 432–37; al-Nasawi, *Sirat al-Sultan Jalal al-Din Mengübirti*, pp. 152ff, 174–79, 194–204, 211ff; C. E. Bosworth, 'Jalal al-Din Kvarazmsah(i) Mengübirni', *EIr* 14 (2008), pp. 404–05.

29. Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: their History and Doctrines*, p. 416.

30. al-Nasawi, *Sirat al-Sultan Jalal al-Din Mengübirti*, pp. 299–335, 374–83; Juwayni, *The History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 2, pp. 396–460; Kafesoglu, *Harezmsahlar devleti tarihi*, pp. 283–5; J. A. Boyle, 'Dynastic and Political History of the Il-Khans', in *The Cambridge History of Iran. V. The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed.

John A. Boyle (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 317–35.

31. C. E. Bosworth, 'Khwarazm-Shahs', *EI*2 4 (1978), p. 1068.
32. Heribert Horst, *Die Staatsverwaltung der Grosseljuqen und Horazmsahs (1038–1221). Eine Untersuchung nach Urkundenformularen der Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1964), pp. 10–12; F. C. de Blois, 'Rashid al-Din Watwat', *EI*2 8 (1995), pp. 444–45.
33. Horst, *Die Staatsverwaltung der Grosseljuqen und Horazmsahs*, p. 25.
34. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 377–80.
35. Juwayni, *History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 1, p. 277. See also E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London/Cambridge: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908–24), vol. 2, pp. 307–10, 330–33; J. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), pp. 200, 432.

2

Periphery as Centre: The Ghurids between the Persianate and Indic Worlds

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The Shansabani dynasts of west-central Afghanistan – or Ghurids, as they are most commonly known – are slowly beginning to attract attention in scholarship on the middle Islamic period (mid-tenth to fifteenth centuries).[2] Several works in Persian, French and English have begun to recuperate their importance.[3] The Ghurids are still considered peripheral to the other Persianate dynasties of the period: the Ghaznavids (c. 990–1186), for example, set a monumental precedent for posterity in Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 999–1030), a pivotal personality around whom many pre-modern authors throughout the last millennium have spun somewhat differing narratives,[4] but one who has nonetheless pervaded the Persianate world's imagination during the last 1000 years. But the Ghurids, though in many respects the territorial and political successors of the Ghaznavids, have remained in their shadow as a mere 'interlude'.[5] It is proposed here that the Ghurids be reconsidered as a more significant, if not central, politico-cultural formation of the middle Islamic period.

Certainly, the Ghurid dynasty calls for re-examination for historical reasons, given the enduring shifts it initiated. In contrast to their seemingly uninfluential place in the Persianate world of Iran, Central Asia and Transoxiana, in South Asia the Ghurids can justifiably be attributed with significantly altering the region's political, religious, and architectural trajectory for centuries to come. Within the historiography of South Asia, however, the Ghurids, along with the many other states pre-dating the Mughal period (1526–1858), have arguably received less than their fair share of attention. The pervasiveness of colonial and later nationalist agendas in the South Asia scholarship of the last century and its result in this scenario – beginning to change only in the last decade or so – have been deconstructed elsewhere.[6] Here it is further proposed that, during the late twelfth century and the period of the Ghurid campaigns into northern India, the Ghurids came to be major and enduring participants in the Persianate world, laying the foundations for an Indo-Iranian relationship that was qualitatively different from that of preceding periods. Thus, the Ghurid dynasty

should figure more prominently in discourses on South Asia, and concomitantly on the Persianate world as well.

An examination of the Ghurids also affords other opportunities as well. One is methodological, in that a study of the dynasty's patronage highlights the potential of material culture, particularly architecture, as a primary source in the writing of historical narrative. A focus on Ghurid architectural patronage allows for the refinement of what it means, more precisely, to speak of the 'Indic' and 'Persianate' worlds – particularly with regard to architecture, but inviting reflection on the terms in other media as well.[7]

The Ghurids: Origins and History

The Shansabani dynasts were likely of eastern Iranian Tajik origin, initially associated with the fertile valleys of the Hari Rud in the region of Ghur, now a province in the centre of modern Afghanistan. Ghur's fertile but relatively inhospitable landscape – rendered so largely by the belligerence of the local population – made reports of the area and its inhabitants rather meagre in the early Arabic geographies. Nonetheless, the early writers do indicate that the religio-cultural intertwining of Islam with Ghur's pre-existing mores occurred late when compared with the surrounding areas, probably sometime in the eleventh century CE, or even later, initially aided by the Ghaznavid campaigns of submission there during the reigns of Mahmud and Mas'ud I (r. 1031–40). Texts of the twelfth century and earlier refer to the people of this region collectively as 'Ghuri', characterising them as semi-nomadic, and even uncivilised.[8] In modern historiography, the term 'Ghuri' has been used to refer not only to the Shansabani dynasts, but also to the general population and other competing elite clans, such as the Shithanids. The self-proclaimed historian of the Shansabanis, Minhaj al-Din Siraj Juzjani (d. c. 1260 in Delhi), related the not infrequent rivalry and factionalism among these well-armed, mountain-dwelling groups, from which the Shansabanis emerged with the upper hand but were continually pressed to maintain their position. The Shansabanis' accepted (but precarious) overlordship of the other clans of Ghur is attested by the fact that, by the third quarter of the twelfth century, they could boast an agnatic lineage – though at times it was contested – farther east, in the Bamiyan Valley, effectively claiming this region also as part of their central holdings.[9]

Like other Persianate dynasties of the middle Islamic period, such as the Saljuqs of Iran (1040–1194), and even to an extent the Ghaznavids, both the Ghurid elites and at least a portion of their subjects led lives of seasonal mobility. The sizeable Jewish community of Firuzkuh (probably modern Jam in Ghur Province, central Afghanistan) – evidenced in the numerous gravestones detailing varied professions of artisans, merchants and scholars – was a probable exception to this mobility, constituting the more permanent segment of the Ghurid polity.[10] But the Ghurid court, and probably much of the rest of the population, avoided the climatic extremes of winter and summer by moving

between the summer capital of Jam-Firuzkuh and a winter settlement '40 leagues' (estimated to be 200 kilometre) to the south in Zamindawar, an area overlapping sections of the modern provinces of Helmand, Farah and Kandahar in south-central Afghanistan.[11]

This lifestyle has been characterised as part of a 'nomad–urban continuum': aside from the standing monuments or ruins of such polities, many material traces of their activities may not fit with current definitions of imperial patronage. Moreover, largely due to the predations of the Mongols in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, Ghurid architecture in Afghanistan does not consist of a substantial 'unitary corpus', but rather a string of isolated structures that have been gradually identified and studied over the last 80 years or so.[12] Modern interpretations of the Ghurids' archaeological record, then, may have contributed to their status as a minor dynasty of the Persianate world. Indeed, this minor status should be contrasted with their meteoric rise to extra-regional prominence and their largely unprecedented campaigns east of the Indus.

The Ghurids captured Lahore from the Ghaznavids in 1186, spelling the definitive end of this well-known dynasty. From here, Ghurid military forces surpassed the political ambitions of the Ghaznavids: while Ghaznavid campaigns into northern India had been raids for plunder, it seems that the Ghurids' intentions in the region were long-term from the start. In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Umayyad amirs of Sindh attempted intermittently, over two centuries, to create such a dominion, though on a smaller scale; they eventually abandoned the ambition. Indian copper-plate inscriptions provide important clues – one from the time of Pulakesin, the Gurjara feudatory to the Chalukya emperor Vikramaditya II (r. c. 734–47), and another from the reign of the Pratihara King Bhoja (r. c. 843–81) of Gwalior – making reference to the reigns of his predecessors Nagabhatta I (r. c. 756–57) and Nagabhatta II (r. c. 815), indicating that the amirs of Sindh campaigned in northwestern India probably at least twice during the eighth and ninth centuries; they were defeated and forced to retreat by Gurjara-Chalukya and Pratihara forces.[13] Thereafter, even the Ghaznavids seemed to be content with their frequent raids upon various north Indian kingdoms without establishing a long-term foothold so far east of the Indus.

Unlike these prior attempts over two centuries, Ghurid forces undertook three north Indian campaigns in quick succession: undeterred by defeats at the hands of the Chaulukyas of Gujarat (c. 950–1304) in 1178, and again by the Chahamanas of Ajmer in 1191, they campaigned a third time in 1192 against the latter, and emerged victorious at last. Thereafter, at least two military commanders – namely Baha al-Din Tughril and Qutb al-Din Aibek – and their subordinates were active east of the Indus as far as Bengal. In the face of both gains and reverses, they succeeded in annexing wide swaths of the Gangetic plain on behalf of the Ghurid sultans Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam

(r. 1163–1203) at Herat and Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam (r. c. 1175–1206) at Ghazna.[14] Thus it can be argued that, nearly a millennium after the great Kushanas (first or second century to early fourth century),[15] the Ghurids were the first power to succeed in unifying, even loosely and briefly, territories in the northern Indian plains, the Indus and Panjab valleys, and farther west.

At the height of their power (c. 1192–1210), the Shansabani dynasts' holdings encompassed territory from eastern Iran through easternmost India. Their military commanders were the first Islamic power from the Persianate world to extend their presence into northern India – a cultural, political and architectural world quite at variance with their local mores and adapted Persianate traditions.[16] This extreme regional variety was a characteristic that some would say determined the brevity of the Ghurids' prominence, for their territories represented centrifugal forces that could not be contained in any unified body for long. In the end, however, it was an external threat that overpowered them: their long-time foes the Khwarazm-shahs (c. 995–1231) occupied Firuzkuh in 1215. Indeed, the various Ghurid chiefs had few qualms about shifting alliances, so that the last Ghurid ruler went westward into Khwarazm-shahi territory and was buried at Bastam (Iran).[17] Admittedly, the Ghurids' cultural suturing of the 'Indic' and 'Persianate' worlds was short-lived in political terms, but it had far-reaching consequences. Their alteration of India's geopolitical, religious, linguistic, architectural and other trajectories for the coming centuries, and the further integration of the Indic and Persianate cultural spheres during their ascendancy, should afford them a more prominent historiographical place.[18]

'Iran' and 'India' Meet Again

While interactions between the Persianate and Indic worlds are evidenced in the historical record since early times, Finbarr Barry Flood describes the Ghurid intervention in India as 'one of the most fascinating moments in world history… when the expansion of the Ghurid polity created the conditions for mobility between these contiguous realms on a previously unimaginable scale'.[19] The significance of this conjoining, however, lies in the details of time and place, which can be obscured by blanket applications of paradigms of translation.

In an inquiry such as this, where encounters between cultural worlds are the subject, the Ghurid territories' extremely disparate expanse poses the risk of inaccurate perceptions, wherein regional specificities are lost in overarching generalisations. Material culture, and particularly architecture, is essential in retaining this specificity, as it provides the loci of encounter between the Indic and Persianate cultural worlds. In broadening the historical informativeness of these loci, which appear as individual dots on a larger vista, it is useful to adopt the framework of an archipelagic landscape, in which the vast expanses that lie between these islands of data, though currently devoid of information, are still

acknowledged.[20] Ultimately, examining the specific cultural encounters embodied in architectural remains can furnish a nuanced view of the new twelfth-century iteration of an age-old relationship between 'India' and 'Iran'.

It has been noted elsewhere that the distinct regions of the Ghurids' territorial span be conceptualised in three principal divisions – namely Khurasan, and the dynasty's homelands of central through western Afghanistan; the Indus and Panjab valleys; and northern India, extending from present-day Gujarat through the western reaches of Bengal. Each of these divisions was certainly distinguished by preferences in architectural style. This in turn is an index of what can be termed architectural culture – a concept including the profoundly different natural resources, materials of construction, bodies of architectural knowledge and practice, and labour structures prevalent in a given region,[21] along with the social and ritual interactions that shaped buildings and were also shaped by them.

Indeed, the prevalent architectural culture of the Ghurid 'heartland' of Khurasan through central Afghanistan – deserves delineation within an otherwise generally conceived late Saljuq 'Persianate world'. This much called for specificity is impeded by the changes wrought by the Mongol campaigns of the 1220s throughout central Asia, specifically in the region of modern Afghanistan. It is probable that many Ghurid structures no longer survive, and those that do present what might be described as a decontextualised view of the dynasty's patronage. Moreover, according to archaeological analysis of the methods of construction, the surviving remains are also locally distinguishable among themselves.[22] Nevertheless, there is merit in treating them as a group here, as they embody indices of a subtly perceptible architectural 'subculture' within the late Saljuq Persianate ethos of Khurasan.

The best documented among the extant Ghurid-period structures include the so-called tomb of Baba Hatim, or Salar Khalil, about 60 kilometres west of Mazar-i Sharif (Balkh Province, after 1155);[23] two structures that were possibly part of a *madrasa* at Chisht (1167); a magnificent *madrasa* complex at Garjistan (1175) with nearby fortifications;[24] Lashkari Bazaar's South Palace refurbishment and the arch at Bust (1150s–1170s); Jam-Firuzkuh's minaret (1174) and its vicinity; portions of Herat's congregational mosque (120001); and the tomb of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam (c. 1203), attached to the mosque's north perimeter. Furthermore, the area from Herat eastward through Bamiyan (including Jam-Firuzkuh) is dotted with tombs, as well as towers and larger fortifications associable with Ghurid activity, and the Bamiyan Valley offers two fortified complexes and a *madrasa* reoccupied during the mid-twelfth or early thirteenth centuries – the last years of the Ghurid dynasty.[25] Finally, a singular carved stone structure known as the Masjid-i Sangi, near Larwand (Farah Province), has been attributed to the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, and is also located near an imposing fortress possibly attributable to the Ghurids.[26]

The majority of Ghurid monumental structures – excluding the fortified towers and complexes, and the Masjid-i Sangi (treated below) – generally conform to the well-established architectural conventions of Khurasan. The buildings are constructed of baked brick, though local variations in brick sizes have been noted.[27] Unusual for the Persianate world, however, is the presence of unbaked brick, and even rammed earth, at some monumental sites such as Lashkari Bazaar. While this major palatial–urban complex's principal architectural fabric belongs to Ghaznavid patronage, large parts of the South Palace underwent alterations after Ghurid occupation, mainly in the form of the reorientation of rooms and small additions.[28] Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the Garjistan *madrasa*, for example (Figure 2.1), Ghurid structures tend to fit within the recognisable architectural ethos of late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Khurasan, in which brick buildings achieved monumentality with imposing entrances and lofty arcuate interiors, both lavishly decorated with epigraphic, geometric and floral designs, executed in terracotta on the exteriors and stucco on the interiors.[29]

Fig. 2.1. Shah-i Mashhad Madrasa. Garjistan, Badghis Province, northwestern Afghanistan. Mid-twelfth century. South façade with principal entrance. Negative: Casimir-Glatzer 1970.

Identifiable Ghurid-period characteristics are present, however, determined by the localised architectural 'subculture' of the more circumscribed region of modern Afghanistan within the larger Persianate world. It has been observed that, particularly in its decorative programmes of epigraphy and other motifs, Ghurid architecture is a distinct interpretation of post-Abbasid, late Saljuq (*irano-mésopotamien*) tendencies.[30] Principally, Ghurid patronage brought 'brick mosaic' terracotta decoration and architectural epigraphy into its own commanding prominence on the interiors and exteriors of buildings – certainly in terms of design, but also in its proclamatory significance. Additionally, Ghurid architectural epigraphy arguably set a direct formal precedent for

Timurid conventions in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when monumental epigraphy took on an even more active role in architectural programmes.

A brief comparison between the Saljuq Minar Saraban (mid- to late twelfth century) (Figure 2.2) in the Jubareh quarter of Isfahan and the best-known Ghurid monument, the minaret of Jam-Firuzkuh (1174–75) (Figure 2.3), suffices to demonstrate important distinctions between the twelfth-century Persianate world's putative 'centre'[31] and its eastern 'periphery'.

Fig. 2.2. Minar Saraban. Jubareh Quarter, Isfahan, Isfahan Province, central Iran. Mid- to late twelfth century. © Alka Patel 2011.

Fig. 2.3. Minar of Jam-Firuzkuh. Jam, Ghur Province, central Afghanistan. 1174–75.
© David Thomas 2003.

Though heavily restored,[32] Isfahan's Minar Saraban embodies the basic characteristics that received further elaboration in the eastern lands under the Ghaznavids, and eventually the Ghurids: it is a slender, tapering tower that is decoratively rather than structurally multi-shafted, having varying designs in baked brick that divide the whole into thirds, with a capping element on top. Two *guldasteh* balconies divide the two topmost stories. The brickwork patterns' diminishing sizes appear to be intended to emphasise the height of the minaret. Three

narrower bands of blue-tile, elongated Kufic punctuate the minaret, the first containing an elaborated *shahada*, the second Qur'an XLI:33, and the third the names of Muhammad's 'rightly-guided' successors.[33]

Already by the early twelfth century, the extant minarets of Ghazna, dating to the reigns of Masud III (r. 1098–1114/15) and Bahram Shah (r. 1117–48/49), show formal and epigraphic elaborations of earlier Saljuq minarets, indicating the growing religio-political and commemorative significance of this architectural form in the eastern lands. Constructed of progressively narrower, stellate shafts divided by elaborate *muqarnas guldastehs*, their surfaces are replete with geometric and floral decorations and extensive epigraphic programmes of Qur'anic verses and the rulers' titles.[34]

The Ghurid minaret at Jam-Firuzkuh (Figure 2.3) can be seen as a further development of this trajectory: the shaft eschews a stellate plan in favour of exclusively cylindrical, tapering sections with flat surfaces, as if to underscore its near-overwhelming decorative programme of geometric and epigraphic elements. The transitions between the three separate shafts and capping storey consist of *muqarnas guldastehs*. The entirety of the surface is graced with terracotta geometric bands recalling those of the Garjistan *madrasa*'s exterior decorations (Figure 2.1), one Kufic band with the *shahada*, another with Qur'an LXI:13–14, and three more (one and possibly others originally blue-tiled) listing the titles of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam. It is the lowermost shaft, however, that is the culmination of this architectural type's religio-political significance in the eastern lands: it displays all 98 verses of Surat Maryam (Qur'an XIX), which have been interpreted as the Ghurid Sultan's proclamation of steadfast allegiance to the Karramiya sect (prior to 1199),[35] and a commemoration of the military victories against the Ghuzz Turks at Ghazna.[36] These victories resulted in the junior Sultan Mu'izz al-Din's long-term occupation of the erstwhile Ghaznavid capital, in turn the springboard for the capture of Lahore and the Ghaznavids' expansion into the Indus and Panjab valleys and northern India.

It may seem paradoxical that the Jam-Firuzkuh minaret's epigraphic programme is less legible than that of Isfahan's Minar Saraban: the former's Qur'anic verses, for example, are to be read in different directions as they follow the angular bands up and down the minaret's vertical surface, and much of the calligraphy is elaborately intertwined with the dense nexus of geometric and floral patterns. Indeed, the sustained emphasis on architectural calligraphy in Ghurid buildings ultimately resulted in the combination of geometric decoration with the letters themselves, in the distinctive knotted Kufic, against a dense floral background – a calligraphic aesthetic associated with Ghurid patronage, seen on the Garjistan *madrasa* (Figure 2.1), and approximately 25 years later on the Herat *jami masjid*'s *pishtaq* (Figure 2.4).[37] The reduced legibility of the Jam-Firuzkuh minaret's epigraphic programme quite possibly hints that, in contrast to Isfahan's Minar Saraban, its role was expanded beyond

that of a simple minaret to serve as a vehicle for the conveyance of messages that were incomprehensible to the general public, but predetermined by and intended for circulation among the Ghurid court's political and religious elites. At variance with the so-called centre of the late Saljuq Persianate world farther west, then, the specific religio-political realities of the eastern edges of this world helped determine the greater prominence of the minaret as an architectural type, as well as the proclamatory character of its epigraphy and its distinctive, elaborate styles.

Fig. 2.4. Congregational Mosque, Herat. Herat Province, western Afghanistan. C. tenth century onward. Southeast iwan, c. 1200. © Alka Patel 2011.

In addition to the localised interpretations of larger Persianate conventions discussed above, the eastern lands under the Ghurids were also distinguished by contiguity and adaptive interaction with the Indic cultural sphere, palpable in Afghanistan's own pre-Islamic Buddhist–Hindu remains, and eventually reinforced by the Ghurids' eastern annexations from the 1170s to the 1190s. Moreover, a surprising number of fortifications dot the Ghurid heartland, resulting in a 'fortified domesticity'[38] which itself further reinforces the idea of a localised architectural 'subculture' at variance with both the Indic and Persianate worlds.

Particularly in the Bamiyan Valley and adjacent areas, some Ghurid-occupied buildings show reuse of pre-existing structures,[39] while others evince continued reliance on building techniques typically found in pre-Islamic structures. Pottery sequences from the fortified hilltop complex of Shahr-i Zohak, 15 kilometres east of Bamiyan, indicate occupation from the middle of

the first millennium to the Ghurid period of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, as well as repairs to the defensive walls during the Ghurid and Timurid periods. But the Ghurids likely controlled the Valley from Sarkoshak, about 45 kilometres northeast of Bamiyan, which despite indications of late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century construction, intriguingly makes use of the 'horizontal squinch' that was common in the region's pre-Islamic (Buddhist–Hindu) remains.[40]

Finally, it would appear that the highly profitable north Indian annexations of the 1190s brought more than material gain to the Ghurid heartland, also expanding the technical and iconographic possibilities for the treatment of Islamic ritual architecture on this eastern edge of the Persianate world. The Masjid-i Sangi, near Larwand (Farah Province) (Figure 2.5), a single-room masonry mosque, appears anomalous when compared with the majority of Ghurid-patronised monuments in the heartland: rather than embodying the localised interpretation of the late Saljuq Persianate world's architectural culture described above, its trabeate construction and discrete iconographic elements have been compared to the temple building practices of northwestern India, specifically the areas of the modern states of Gujarat and Rajasthan.[41]

Fig. 2.5. Masjid-i Sangi, Larward. Farah Province, southwestern Afghanistan. C. 1200. West exterior façade. Photographer: Josephine Powell, c. 1960. © Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

As a whole, however, the structure is better understood in light of coastal Gujarat's mosques, dating from the mid-twelfth century and later. Since a thorough analysis of this regionally circumscribed mosque corpus has been undertaken elsewhere,[42] here it is sufficient to highlight the elements that distinguish northwestern India's temple- and mosque-building practices. The Larwand mosque's *qibla* exterior (Figure 2.5) is comparable to the same elevation of the mid-twelfth- to early thirteenth-century Chhoti Masjid of Bhadresvar (Kachh District, Gujarat) (Figure 2.6): while contemporaneous temple exteriors (Figure 2.7) were heavily sculpted, the two mosque elevations virtually eschew carved ornamentation, the plainness instead bringing attention to the masonry blocks of their construction – precisely regular at Bhadresvar, and noticeably irregular at Larwand. Both mosque exteriors have projecting *mihrabs*, circular at Bhadresvar and angular at Larwand.

Fig. 2.6. Chhoti Masjid. Bhadresvar, Kachh, northwestern Gujarat (India). Mid- to late twelfth century. © Alka Patel 2001.

The Bhadresvar mosque's circular *mihrab* has decorative bands, but they are limited to the *mihrab*'s exterior projection. The principal decorative elements are bands carved in relief at the top: inspired by the iconographic lexicon of north Indian temples, both mosques have the canonical sequence of overhanging cornice (Sanskrit *kapotali*), recessed band (*antarapatra*) with jewel (*ratna*) series, and ribbed eave (*khurachhadya*) traditionally concentrated at the base of a temple superstructure, here transferred to the equivalent point on buildings of Islamic worship (the superstructures are no longer in situ on either mosque).[43]

Establishing the Larwand mosque's greater rapport with twelfth- to thirteenth-century Gujarati mosques rather than temples is significant in two ways: first, it aids in confirming the date of the Larwand mosque to the latter half of the twelfth- to early thirteenth-century period, bolstering with physical evidence what had been a conclusion based on the circumstantial assumption that the Ghurid campaigns into northern India must have garnered not only immense material wealth but also new sources of skilled labour. Perhaps more important-ly, the Larwand mosque's direct relationship with the contemporaneous mosques of northwestern India demon-strates the importation into Ghurid lands of something much more specific than an ill-defined, generic reference to Indian temple architecture;[44] at Larwand,

Fig. 2.7. Shiva Temple. Chittor, Rajasthan (India). Thirteenth century. © Alka Patel 1996.

members of the Ghurid elite on the eastern fringes of the Persianate world patronised an already well developed and codified tradition of Islamic architecture[45] from a specific location within the Indic cultural sphere. Ultimately, the Larwand mosque, together with the localised interpretations of the late Saljuq Persianate building ethos and the historically deep layers of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic Buddhist–Hindu remains (discussed above), all rendered the Ghurid 'heartland' subtly but significantly distinguishable from the larger Persianate world.

With their capture of Lahore in 1186, the Ghurid sultans and their armies encountered the western edges of the Indic cultural sphere. However, as was the case with the 'Persianate world' and the need for its differentiation in order to appreciate the specificities of Ghurid-period architectural practices, its Indic counterpart requires an analogous differentiation. Such an approach not only brings greater exactitude to a discussion of cultural worlds; it sheds light on the variegated landscapes of the Ghurids' short-lived but consequential territorial domain.

Prior to c. 1025 and the Ghaznavids' definitive defeat of the Hindu-sahis (c. 845–1025) of Urdhvabanda, probably located east of Peshawar,[46] these rulers and their predecessors the Turksahis (c. 645–725) patronised religious architecture from eastern Afghanistan through the mountainous areas straddling the modern Pakistani provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North-West Frontier Province) West Panjab and extending southward through upper

Sindh.[47] The surviving temples, spanning the period from the late fifth to early eleventh centuries, have recently been classified as Gandhara-Nagara, and distinguished as an architectural culture from the Nagara-Latina of north India. Though the Gandhara-Nagara corpus drew its larger forms and iconographies from the latter, along with input from Kashmir, it was 'self-contained', with only occasional dialogue with the subcontinent.[48]

Indeed, Gandhara-Nagara architectural culture overall seems to exhibit more differences than similarities with its north Indian counterpart. First, in contrast to the prevalence of stone trabeate construction, as in north India, the Gandhara-Nagara region is characterised by a surprising variety of materials: the earlier temples were often of rubble fill and mortared ashlar facing, with simple domical interiors, while those of the eighth century onward tended to be of baked brick, sandstone, or local volcanic stone shaped into bricks, sometimes with limestone elements. While the surviving Gandhara-Nagara temples – doubtless only a small fraction of the entire corpus – seem to hint at the predominance of different building materials over time, no such tendencies are visible in space: the use of baked brick, for example, occurs both at Pattan-Minara (eighth century), at the southern end of the Gandhara-Nagara region, and at Kalar (mid-eighth century) (Figure 2.8), in the north.

Virtually all the temples exhibit trefoil or cinquefoil arched entrances and domical interiors (Figure 2.9), the multi-lobed arches especially referring to Kashmiri and Gandharan precedents. Moreover, Gandhara-Nagara temples index major divergences in ritual and function almost from their inception, as seen in the inclusion of elements that were unprecedented in north India: the earlier fifth- to seventh-century temples often had additional single-room, domed shrines inside their main plinths (Sanskrit: *jagati*) at the corners, while the later temples had second- and third-storey chambers reached by stairs or gently sloping ramps. The ritual or other functions of these elements have yet to be determined.[49] Two structures securely attributable to Ghurid patronage survive in the vicinity of Multan (southwest Panjab Province).

Fig. 2.8. Temple at Kalar. West Panjab (Pakistan). Exterior façade. C. eighth century.
© Alka Patel 1997.

Fig. 2.9. Temple at Kalar, interior. © Alka Patel 1997.

The building known as the tomb of Sadan Shahid (late twelfth century) (Figure 2.10) is near Muzaffargarh, southwest of Multan, while the unusual, combined tomb-*ribat* of 'Ali ibn Karmakh (c. 1175) (Figure 2.11) is to the east, near Khanewal. Both the context and detail of these structures have been analysed elsewhere;[50] the present exploration expands their analysis as loci of encounter between the very specific manifestations of the 'Persianate' and 'Indic' cultural spheres that are the subjects of this chapter, enriching our

Fig. 2.10. Tomb of Sadan Shahid. Near Muzzafargarh, West Panjab (Pakistan). Exterior. Late twelfth century. © Alka Patel 1998.

definition of these scholarly constructs and emphasising the uniqueness of their late twelfth-century encounter.

Among the various building materials available within the Gandhara-Nagara architectural culture discussed above, it comes as little surprise that both Ghurid-period structures were constructed in baked brick. All monumental architecture of the Ghurid 'heartland' was built in this material – excepting, of course, the stone-foundation fortified complexes and Masjid-i Sangi, which arguably do not qualify as such in any case. The choice of baked brick surely allowed for an easier transposition of the Ghurid patrons' preferences into this region; since it was recently taken from the Ghaznavids, the consolidation and proclamation of change in rulership demanded

Fig. 2.11. The Ribat of Ali ibn Karmakh. Near Kabirwala, West Panjab (Pakistan). Interior mihrab. C. 1175. © Alka Patel 1998.

building on a monumental scale. Moreover, the pre-existing Gandhara-Nagara architectural culture provided craftsmen long adept at handling baked brick (as well as other materials) in the construction of Gandhara-Nagara Buddhist and Hindu temples and monasteries.

Indeed, the specificities of the eastern edges of the 'Persianate world' during Ghurid ascendancy, discussed above, may also be discernible in these structures. While the dearth and deteriorated condition of surviving Ghaznavid architectural patronage in modern Pakistan[51] makes only tentative observations possible, it is nonetheless noteworthy that the *mihrab* (Figure 2.12) of the Ghaznavid mosque at Udegram, Swat (1048–49),[52] differs in important ways from the significant decorative and ritual elements of the Ghurid buildings in the Indus Valley. These differences serve, at least until more evidence comes to light, to distinguish the Ghurids' encounter with and adaptation of Gandhara-Nagara architectural culture, quite possibly presaging their modus operandi in northern India (see below).

The Udegram *mihrab* was made with irregular schist slabs to shape the corbelled rather than arcuate niche, hearkening to forms and building techniques found in nearby Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples in Swat,

and hinting at what might be termed an architectural 'subculture' of the larger Gandhara-Nagara ethos.[53] Nevertheless, the niche also evokes Persianate sources, having been described overall as 'typical… with a square plan characteristic of mosque architecture in the eastern area to the pre-Seljuq period… confirm[ing] the dating… to the Ghaznavid period'.[54] While it is possible that the Udegram mosque as a whole, and its *mihrab* in particular, had stucco revetments and sculpted ornament, as was the case with the Buddhist–Hindu buildings of Swat, in its present state it is devoid of calligraphic or other decoration.

The Ghurid-period buildings (Figures 2.13–14), by contrast, demonstrate the transplantation from their 'heartland' of established architectural decorations,

Fig. 2.12. *Ghaznavid Mosque. Udegram, Swat (Pakistan). Mihrab. Eleventh century.* © Alka Patel 1997.

Fig. 2.13. *Qutb mosque. Delhi (India). Qibla façade detail. 1199.* © Alka Patel 1996.

combined with immediately recognisable elements of Gandhara-Nagara iconography.

The exterior calligraphy of the tomb of Sadan Shahid (Figure 2.10) contains Qur'anic and more general content, the eastern (entrance) façade graced with Qur'an XLVIII:1–3, and framed medallions and running bands with *Allah* boldly inscribed in *naskhi*.[55] Moreover, both sets of calligraphy are placed against dense floral areas, altogether hearkening to the calligraphic programmes of Garjistan (Figure 2.1) and Herat (Figure 2.4). Meanwhile, the calligraphy on the *mihrab* of the tomb-*ribat* of 'Ali ibn Karmakh (Figure 2.11) is more elaborate, with Qur'anic (XIX: 18–19 on frame's outer band; XIX: 129 in half-dome of niche; LXI:13 on niche pillars) and historical content, along with names of Muhammad's 'rightly guided' successors.

Fig. 2.14. Qutb minar. Delhi (India). Begun 1199.
© Alka Patel 2011.

The historical inscription on the inner band of the frame – no longer in situ – identifies ibn Karmakh as the patron of the structure.[56] Due to the greater quantity of script, it is even more comparable with the prominent calligraphic programmes of buildings in the Ghurid 'heartland'. The anticipated viewers and users of the two structures probably determined the content of their calligraphy: a mainly non-literate public for the tomb called for much less to read than the potentially selective, religiously versed group for the tomb-*ribat*'s interior *mihrab*. Nevertheless, both structures' decorative programmes clearly evoke their contemporaries in the western Ghurid lands.

As if balancing the references to Afghanistan, these buildings' decorative programmes also incorporate prominent Gandhara-Nagara iconographic elements. The trefoil pediments on Sadan Shahid's exterior and the tomb-*ribat*'s interior *mihrab* both derived from the dormer-window or *chandrasala* motif articulating the exterior elevations of the region's temples (Figure 2.8). The tightly curved trefoil can be traced to the individual elements of the net-like multiplication of *chandrasalas* on temple spires, while temple niches also had the trefoil form derived from the *chandrasala*. In contrast to the Ghaznavid-period *mihrab* at Udegram, then, the two surviving Ghurid structures appear to have brought their own distinctive traces of the eastern

'Persianate world' to this region, newly annexed by the sultans, and combined these traces with the Gandhara-Nagara architectural culture rooted here.

It is remarkable that, in the 'periphery' of northern India, a territory annexed less than 25 years before the Khwarazm-shahi occupation of Firuzkuh in 1215, and the definitive end of the Shansabani dynasty, provides a corpus of Ghurid-patronised architecture that rivals in both number and monumentality that of the 'heartland' in Afghanistan. Five surviving mosque complexes – including Delhi's famous Qutb Mosque (founded 1992) (Figure 2.13) and its Qutb Minar (begun 1199) (Figure 2.14) – and an '*idgah* have been attributed to Ghurid patronage by inscription and/or rigorous art-historical analysis.[57] In two recent publications, two smaller structures have been proposed for the corpus, thereby bringing the count to seven surviving Ghurid monuments in India alone. The existence of three more buildings, while they are no longer extant, is indicated in other ways: inscriptional fragments and textual references point to the construction of a mosque at Hansi after Aibek occupied the strategically important city in 1192. Furthermore, inscriptions refer to buildings marking the taking of the forts at Nagaur in 1196 and Gwalior in 1200.[58] Additionally, a third Ghurid military commander, Muhammad Bakhtiyar, was campaigning in the region of modern West Bengal, and founded a mosque at Nadiya after his defeat of Laksmanasena in 1205.[59] The sheer quantity of the extant and otherwise documented structures in an area where the Ghurid armies actively campaigned further underscores the central role of architectural patronage in territorial annexation.

The architectural culture of north India itself probably determined the longevity of Ghurid-patronised structures: unlike the larger Persianate world of Iran–Afghanistan, and even much of the Gandhara-Nagara region, stone was the preferred material for public architecture in the region from at least the fifth century, and possibly earlier.[60] Precisely this use of stone has led to the best-known aspect of these complexes, namely the reuse of building materials from older structures. In the Persianate world, and in some parts of the Gandhara-Nagara region, the predominance of the much less durable baked brick not only required constant maintenance against wind erosion and occasional rainfall, it was also rarely reusable for later construction. In India, however, large portions of older stone buildings, including columns and entire ceilings, could be profitably reused to build new structures with great advantage, expediting the erection of religiously and politically essential buildings such as mosques for a newly coalescing Islamic rulership in an area not previously controlled by Muslim elites. It is well known that the practice of reuse provided the additional, extremely important advantage of political capital: architectural reuse was actively deployed in Ghurid court histories for the dissemination of their reputation as a transregional, orthodox Islamic power.[61]

Indeed, the first enduring Islamic power in northern India exercised an impact on the region's architectural culture that was commensurate with its

political significance there. As we have seen, Muslim communities already settled within Hindu-ruled states – for example, along coastal Gujarat in Caulukya territories – had during the previous two centuries (at least) patronised mosques adhering to local building practices, demonstrating the adaptation of structural modules and iconographies to Islamic purposes. But the Ghurid buildings about 1,000 kilometres to the northeast, inhabited and structured a very different receptive framework (as well as an identifiable architectural 'subculture')[62] from these precursors: they signalled a politico-military Islamic power established in northern India for the first time, and the new elites commissioned monumental mosque complexes on an unprecedented scale. Consequently, building types and methods that were new to north India were required to fulfil ritual, dimensional and iconographic necessities.

The north Indian Ghurid buildings' fabrics of reused and newly carved elements have been examined elsewhere.[63] Here, my brief analysis focuses on the arched façade of the Qutb Mosque's *qibla* area (c. 1199) (Figure 2.13) as an index of the introduction of new elements from the eastern Persianate world into north India's architectural culture, specifically as a result of Ghurid ascendancy in the region. First, the novelty of the Ghurid-period arched façade in India should be emphasised: while this architectural element had been known and prominently utilised, particularly in caravansarais and, on a smaller scale, some mosques of the late Saljuq Persianate world, in India it had no functional or ritual place in temple architecture. Moreover, its absence in the smaller, coastal mosques erected by Muslim mercantile communities in Gujarat can be explained at least partly by the employment of craftsmen trained primarily in temple construction (see above). The arched façade, then, was a direct architectural reference to the larger Persianate world from which the Ghurids had emerged.

Not unlike the Ghurid-patronised buildings in the Gandhara-Nagara region, the north Indian buildings encapsulate the invigoration of the current architectural culture with the importation of elements from the Ghurids' eastern edges of the Persianate world. The Delhi façade and Qutb Minar (Figures 2.13–14), for example, show the familiar prominence of architectural calligraphy with Qur'anic and historical content[64] from both the Ghurid heartland and the Indus and Panjab valleys. But, rather than the *naskh* modified for cut brick and terracotta farther west, the entire decorative programme is executed in stone, whose expressive capabilities in the hands of generationally trained stone-workers allowed for the exclusive use of a fluid *naskh* with luxurious floral decoration.

It is the Qutb Mosque's arched façade (Figure 2.13) that encapsulates the innovative application of age-old Indic iconography both on a larger scale and in a new context. While the *naskh* calligraphic bands command a central place in the overall decorative programme of the façade, in the Indic context the abundant floral decoration is not simply a filling element or local interpretation

of Afghan decoration; it is as fundamental to the overall programme as the calligraphy. Since the earliest known Indian sculpture and rock-cut temples and monasteries of the late centuries BCE, and continuing throughout the entrenched tradition of lithic architecture in the region, floral decoration has been an integral element of architectural iconography. It is a continued reference to the Water Cosmology, an array of water and fertility cults that provided an entire iconographic lexicon to the more codified and doctrine-based religious systems of Brahmanical Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.[65] The stylistic commonality between earlier (Figure 2.15) and contemporaneous examples and the Qutb façade further underscores the semantic intent of the luxurious floral decoration of the façade.
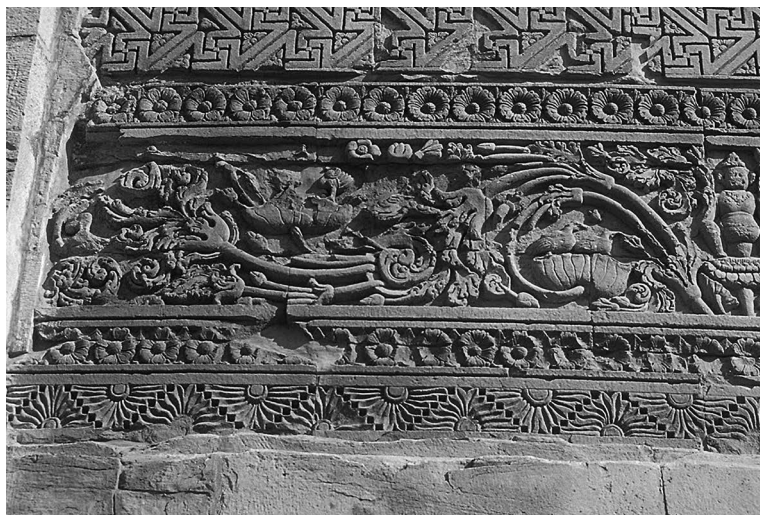
Fig. 2.15. Buddhist Stupa at Dhamekh. Near Banares, Uttar Pradesh (India). Sixth century. © Alka Patel 1996.

Parallel to the innovative combinations between the eastern Persianate and Gandhara-Nagara architectural cultures perceptible in the Indus and Panjab valleys, in northern India also discernible traces linger of the encounter between the eastern Persianate and local architectural cultures made possible by the new Ghurid presence.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

This chapter has undertaken a close examination of the Ghurid dynasty and its historically short-lived but extremely consequential empire of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. It has contended that, as a result of the Ghurid campaigns, the Indic and Persianate worlds came into forms of contact that deserve to be distinguished from the age-old dialogues occurring between 'India' and 'Iran'. Thereafter, India continued to be an integral part of the

broader Persianate world on many cultural fronts, tracing a relationship that has endured well into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the historical moment of the late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries must be seen for its own specificities, particularly since it was to be the forbear of a nexus for centuries to come.

Most significantly, this analysis has highlighted the importance of material culture, specifically architecture, in discerning both the variegated terrains usually encompassed within scholarly constructs such as the 'Persianate' and 'Indic' worlds, as well as the regionally distinguishable encounters between imported and localised building traditions. First, it was important to highlight that the Ghurid 'heartland' itself held subtle but significant differences from the larger Persianate world, bringing into focus its eastern zone as strongly tinctured by the long pre-Islamic presence of Buddhist–Hindu practices and, subsequently, a clear dialogue with the Islamic architecture of northwestern India. In a parallel fashion, the 'Indic' world itself merits further disaggregation between its western areas and those of northern India, the latter having conventionally been considered 'central'. It is hoped that a more nuanced and thus more historically accurate apprehension of these two cultural spheres now comes into view.

Notes:

1. I am grateful to the attendants of the Soudavar Symposium 'From Saljuq Conquest to Mongol Collapse' (SOAS, 9 February 2013) for their comments on the conference version of this paper, and to David Thomas and Ali Anooshahr for their valuable feedback on previous drafts as it developed into chapter form.

2. The periodisation is borrowed from Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 2: *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

3. Four Persian-language works are 'Atīq Allah Pazhvāk, *Ghūrīyān* (Kabul: Anjumān-e Tārīkh-e Afghānistān, 1968); Mahdī Roshanzamir, *Tārīkh-e Siyāsī wa Nizāmī-ye Dūdmān-e Ghūrī* (Tehran: Dānishgāh-e Millī-e Irān, 1978); Asghar Farughi Abari, *Tārīkh-e Ghūrīyān* (Tehran: Sāzmān-e Mutāl'a wa Tadwīn-e Kutub-e 'Ulūm-e Insāni-e Daneshgāhā, 2003); and Mahmud Shah Mahmud, *Tārīkh-e impirātūrī-e Ghūrīyān* (Kabul: Mu'assasah-e Intishārāt-e Khāvar, 2009), treated in Alka Patel, 'Text at Nationalist Object: Modern Persian-Language Historiography on the Ghurids (c.1150–1215)', in A. Patel and T. Daryaee, eds, *Ancient through Modern: India and Iran in the Longue Durée*. 143–66 (Jordan Center for Persian Studies, 2017). Janine Sourdel-Thomine analysed the minaret of Jam, the best-known Ghurid monument, in *Le minaret ghouride de Jam, un chef d'oevre du XIIe siècle* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 2004). Most recently, Finbarr Barry Flood treats the Ghurids at some length in his *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu–Muslim' Encounter* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), esp. pp. 89–259. See also David Thomas, 'The Ebb and Flow of an Empire: The Ghurid Polity of Central Afghanistan in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', PhD dissertation, La Trobe University, 2011.

4. For differing receptions of Mahmud of Ghazna, see, for example, Ali Anooshahr, 'Mughal Historians and the Memory of the Islamic Conquest of India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43: 3 (2006).

5. As characterised by C. E. Bosworth, 'Ghurids', *EIr* 10 (2001).

6. See, for example, Alka Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat: Architecture and Society During the Twelfth through Fourteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), esp. Chapter 1; and 'Revisiting the Term "Sultanate"', in Abha Narain Lambah and Alka Patel, eds, *The Architecture of the Indian Sultanates* (Mumbai: Marg, 2006).

7. For literary production and its analysis, see Sunil Sharma, 'Redrawing the Boundaries of '*Ajam* in Early Modern Persian Literary Histories', in A. Amanat and F. Vejdani, eds, *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012).

8. C. E. Bosworth, 'Ghurids' in *EI*2; and 'The Early Islamic History of Ghur', *Central Asiatic Journal* 6: 2 (June 1961); Pazhvak, *Ghūrīyān*, pp. 3ff. For a continuation of the prejudicial view of the Ghurids into the present day, see Thomas, 'Ebb and Flow', pp. 15, 22ff, 29–31.

9. For Shansabani–Shithani rivalry, see esp. Abu 'Amr Minhaj al-Din 'Uthman ibn Siraj al-Din Muhammad Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri (A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of India),* transl. H. Raverty, 2 vols (London: Gilbert & Rivington, 1881), vol. 1, pp. 312–14, 367; for Bamiyan, see C. E. Bosworth and M. S. Asimov, eds, *The Age of Achievement: AD 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), vol. IV, Part 1, p. 184; Thomas, 'Signifying the "Ghurid Self" – the Juxtaposition Between Historical Labels and the Expression of Identity in Material Culture', *Journal of Historical and European*

Studies 3 (October 2010), pp. 71–88.

10. See Andrea Bruno, 'Notes on the Discovery of Hebrew Inscriptions in the Vicinity of the Minaret of Jam', *East and West* 14: 3–4 (1963), pp. 206–8; E. C. D. Hunter, 'Hebrew-Script Tombstones from Jam, Afghanistan', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 61: 1 (2010); and Thomas, 'Ebb and Flow', esp. pp. 268–71.

11. See Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, vol. 1, esp. p. 386.

12. Robert Hillenbrand, 'The Architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids', in Carole Hillenbrand, ed., *The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture. Studies in Honor of Clifford Edmund Bosworth* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), vol. 2; and esp. Thomas, 'Ebb and Flow', pp. 22–8.

13. R. C. Majumdar, 'The Gwalior Prasasti of the Gurjara-Pratihara King Bhoja', *Epigraphia Indica* XVIII (1925); and David Pingree, 'Sanskrit Evidence for the Presence of Arabs, Jews, and Persians in Western India: Ca. 700–1300', *Journal of the Oriental Institute, M.S. University of Baroda* 31: 1 (1981).

14. For the Ghurids' conquests and losses in northern India, see Alka Patel, 'Expanding the Ghurid Architectural Corpus East of the Indus: The Jagesvara Temple at Sadadi, Rajasthan', *Archives of Asian Art* 59 (2009).

15. Dates for the Kushanas' official demise range from c. 180 to 300 CE. See Ahmad Hasan Dani, 'Eastern Kushans and Kidarites in Gandhara and Kashmir', in Boris Litvinsky, Zhang Guang-da and R. Shabani Samghabadi, eds, *The Crossroads of Civilizations: AD 250 to 750* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), esp. p. 163.

16. See Pazhvak, *Ghūrīyān*, esp. pp. 85–95.

17. See Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, vol. 1, pp. 412, 419–20; Peter Jackson, 'The Fall of the Ghurid Dynasty', in Hillenbrand, *Sultan's Turret*, vol. 2.

18. See also Patel, 'Revisiting the Term "Sultanate"'.

19. Flood, *Objects of Translation*, p. 91.

20. After Thomas, *Ebb and Flow*, esp. p. 37.

21. See Alka Patel, 'Architectural Cultures and Empire: The Ghurids in Northern India (c. 1192–1210)', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 21 (2011).

22. Hillenbrand, 'Architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids', p. 198; and esp. Marc Le Berre, Henri Marchal, Jean-Claude Gardin and Bertille Lyonnet, *Monuments Pré-islamiques de l'Hindukush Central, Mémoires de La Délégation Archéologique Française En Afghanistan* vol. XXIV (Paris: Éditions Rechèrce sur les Civilisations, 1987).

23. The structure was initially attributed to Ghaznavid patronage, but distinct exterior and interior similarities with other Ghurid-patronised buildings seem more plausible. See A. S. Melikian Chirvani and Assadullah Souren, 'Remarques préliminaires sur un mausolée ghaznévide', *Arts Asiatiques* XVII (1968); Janine Sourdel-Thomine, 'Le mausolée de Baba Hatim en Afghanistan', *Revue des Études Islamiques* 39 (1971).

24. According to the initial documentation of the structure and its surroundings by Michael Casimir and Bernt Glatzer, 'Shah-i Mashhad, a Recently Discovered Madrasah of the Ghurid Period in Gargistan', *East and West* 21: 1–2 (1971), esp. p. 54.

25. For the less studied outskirts of Herat, see Ute Franke and Thomas Urban, *Areia Antica – Ancient Herat: Summary of the Work Carried Out by the DAI-Mission in Collaboration with the Institute of Archaeology, Ministry of Information and Culture, Kabul, August–September 2006* (Berlin: German Foreign Office/German Archaeological Institute [DAI], 2006), esp. pp. 10–11ff.

26. See Alka Patel, 'The Rehmāṇa-Prāsāda Abroad: Masjid-i Sangī of Larwand (Farah Province, Afghanistan)', in *Prāsāda-Niddhī: Temple Architecture and Sculpture of South and Southeast Asia, Essays in Honour of Professor M.A. Dhaky*, pp. 84–99 (eds P.P. Dhar, Gerd Mevissen, and Devangana Desai New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2015). For the nearby fortifications, see Warwick Ball, 'Some Notes on the Masjid-i Sangi at Larwand in Central Afghanistan', *South Asian Studies* 50 (1991), esp. pp. 108–9.

27. Thomas, 'Ebb and Flow', pp. 166ff.

28. Daniel Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar: une résidence royale ghaznévide et ghoride*, 2 vols, vol. IA, *L'Architecture* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1963), esp. pp. 20, 28, 31, 41; Hillenbrand, 'Architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids', p. 167.

29. Hillenbrand, 'Architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids', p. 198.

30. See Janine Sourdel-Thomine, *Lashkari Bazar: une résidence royale ghaznévide et ghoride,* 2 vols, vol. IB, *Le décor non-figuratif et les inscriptions* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1963), p. 71.

31. As implied by André Godard in 'Isfahan', *Athar-e Iran* II: 1 (1937), esp. pp. 14–15.

32. For pre-restoration views, see Myron Bement Smith, 'The Manars of Isfahan', *Athar-e Iran* I: 2 (1936), Figs 223 and 224.

33. Y. A. Godard, 'Notice épigraphique', *Athar-e Iran* I: 2 (1936), pp. 364–5.

34. Ralph Pinder-Wilson, 'Ghaznavid and Ghurid Minarets', *Iran* 39 (2001), esp. pp. 155–65. For possible earlier precedents in Lahore, see Finbarr B. Flood, 'Between Ghazna and Delhi: Lahore and Its Lost Manara', in Warwick Ball and Leonard Harrow, eds, *Cairo to Kabul* (London: Melisende, 2002).

35. Flood, 'Ghurid Monuments'; and Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 101–2.

36. Sourdel-Thomine, *Le minaret ghouride de Jam*, esp. pp. 127ff; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 96–8.

37. James Allan, paper presented at symposium, 'The Idea of Iran, from Saljuq Collapse to Mongol Conquest', School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK, 2013; Sheila S. Blair, 'The Madrasa at Zuzan: Islamic Architecture in Eastern Iran on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion', *Muqarnas* 3 (1985), esp. pp. 86ff; Hillenbrand, 'Architecture of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids', p. 173.

38. Holly Edwards, 'The Ribat of 'Ali B. Karmakh', *Iran* 29 (1991), p. 90.

39. P. H. B. Baker and F. R. Allchin, *Shahr-i Zohak and the History of the Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan*, Ancient India and Iran Trust Series, vol. 1 (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1991), pp. 35–106. Though it is inconclusive, see also Marc Le Berre, 'Le Monument de Danestama en Afghanistan', *Révue des Études Islamiques* 38 (1970).

40. Baker and Allchin, *Shahr-i Zohak and the History of the Bamiyan Valley*, pp. 161–79.

41. See Gianroberto Scarcia and Maurizio Taddei, 'The Masgid-i Sangi of Larvand', *East and West* 23: 1–2 (June 1973); and especially Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 203–23.

42. See Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat*.

43. Ibid., pp. 119–20.

44. See, for example, Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 208ff.

45. See Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat*, pp. 83–5, 120; and Patel, 'The Rehmāṇa-Prāsāda Abroad: Masjid-i Sangī of Larwand'.

46. For the Sahis, see Abdur Rehman, *The Last Two Dynasties of the Sahis: Their History, Archaeology, Coinage and Palaeography* (Delhi: Renaissance, 1988).

47. Michael W. Meister, *Temples of the Indus: Studies in the Hindu Architecture of Ancient Pakistan* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), esp. Fig. 1.

48. Michael Meister, 'Gandhara-Nagara Temples of the Salt Range and Indus', *Kala: The Journal of the Indian Art History Congress* 4 (1998), pp. 45ff; Meister, *Temples of the Indus*, p. 27.

49. Meister, 'Gandhara-Nagara Temples', pp. 48ff; *idem*, *Temples of the Indus*, pp. 12ff, 27, 32–3, 52–61; Michael Meister, Abdur Rehman and Farid Khan, 'Discovery of a New Temple on the Indus', *Expedition* 42: 1 (Spring 2000), pp. 37–46.

50. See Edwards, 'Ribat of 'Ali B. Karmakh'; Finbarr B. Flood, 'Ghurid Architecture in the Indus Valley: The Tomb of Shaykh Sadan Shahid', *Ars Orientalis* 31 (2001), pp. 129–66; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 137–8.

51. See Umberto Scerrato, 'Research on the Archaeology and History of Islamic Art in Pakistan: Excavation of the Ghaznavid Mosque on Mt. Raja Gira, Swat', *East and West* 35 (1985), pp. 439–50. For another Ghaznavid mosque at Giri, near Taxila, see Abdur Rehman, 'Sultanate Period Architecture in Panjab (1000 AD–1500 AD)', in *Architectural Heritage of Pakistan II: Sultanate Period Architecture (Proceedings of the Seminar on Sultanate Period Architecture in Pakistan* [Lahore, Nov., 1990] (A. Rehman, ed., Lahore: Anjuman Mimaran, 1991), p. 40.

52. Muhammad Nazir Khan, 'A Ghaznavid Historical Inscription from Udegram, Swat', *East and West* 35: 1–3 (September 1985).

53. See also Abdur Rehman, 'Balo Kile Gumbad (Swat)', *Journal of Central Asia* 15 (Winter 1984). For a schist-built Hindu temple in Swat, see Pierfrancesco Callieri, Luca Colliva, Roberto Micheli, Abdul Nasir and Luca Maria Olivieri, 'Bir-kot-Ghwandai, Swat, Pakistan: 1998–1999 Excavation Report', *East and West* 50: 1–4 (2000).

54. Scerrato, 'Research on the Archaeology and History of Islamic Art', p. 445.

55. Flood, 'Ghurid Architecture in the Indus Valley', pp. 139–40.

56. See Edwards, 'Ribat of 'Ali B. Karmakh', p. 92. The exterior Qur'anic and other calligraphic bands were already missing due to looting by 1997, when the photograph for this chapter was taken, having last been in situ in the early 1980s, when they were studied by H. Edwards.

57. See, for example, Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, 'The Architecture of Baha al-Din Tughrul in the Region of Bayana, Rajasthan', *Muqarnas* 4 (1987), pp. 114–32; Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, *Nagaur: Sultanate and Early Mughal History and Architecture of the District of Nagaur, India*, Royal Asiatic Society Monographs Vol. XXVIII (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1993); Alka Patel, 'Toward Alternative Receptions of Ghurid Architecture in North Inda (Late Twelfth–Early Thirteenth Century CE)', *Archives of Asian Art* 54 (2004); Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 89–259.

58. J. Horovitz, 'The Inscriptions of Muhammad Ibn Sam, Qutbuddin Aibeg and Iltutmish', *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* 12 (1911), pp. 15, 19, 22, 24; Z. A. Desai, 'A New Inscription of Muhammad Bin Sam', *Epigraphia Indica-Arabic and Persian Supplement* (1968), pp. 1–3.

59. Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* vol. 4, pp. 517–20.

60. Michael W. Meister, M. A. Dhaky and Krishna Deva, eds, *Foundations of North Indian Style c. 250 B.C.–A.D. 1100*, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture Vol. 2* (Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies/Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 22.

61. See, for example, F. B. Flood, 'Introduction', in F. B. Flood, ed., *Piety and Politics in the Early Indian Mosque* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

62. See M. A. Dhaky, 'The Genesis and Development of Maru-Gurjara Temple Architecture', in Pramod Chandra, ed., *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture* (Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 114–65.
63. See Patel, 'Alternative Receptions of Ghurid Architecture'; Patel, 'Architectural Cultures and Empire'; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 89ff.
64. Horovitz, 'Inscriptions of Muhammad Ibn Sam', p. 15.
65. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Yaksas* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971).

3

The Mongols in Iran, 1219–1256

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Chinggis Khan was born probably in the 1160s – 1162 and 1167 are the dates most often favoured. He died, we can state with certainty, in 1227. The first two-thirds of his life was spent in Mongolia (apart, perhaps, from a period of as long as ten years about which we know absolutely nothing: one suggestion is that he may have been in north China, in the service of the reigning Chin dynasty). By 1206 he had become supreme in Mongolia, having triumphed over most of the Mongol and Turkic tribes of that area. It is arguable that achieving this supremacy was the more difficult part of his career, and that the remaining one-third of his life, in which he conquered a prodigiously vast proportion of Asia, was less of a challenge than becoming master of Mongolia had been. Be that as it may, in 1206 a *quriltai*, an assembly of princes and notables, was held, which acknowledged Chinggis as the paramount ruler of Mongolia. This was the prelude to what ultimately became a series of military campaigns of world conquest.

It is, however, doubtful that Chinggis had any such intention at the time. Historians, reasoning backwards from the astonishing events of the next few decades, have tended to assume that conquest, occupation and rule were what had been intended from the very start.[1] But it seems much more likely that what happened in the early stages of Chinggis's campaigns was something rather traditional: the raiding of vulnerable, sedentary neighbours for the sake of loot or more formal tribute. Thomas Barfield has argued persuasively that in general, this was the preference of those who had come to dominate a nomadic steppe confederation in the lands north and west of China, and that such leaders tended to resort to more definitive conquest only when they were unable to extract what they wanted by less troublesome means.[2]

Such raiding commenced with expeditions in the obvious direction: towards China. The northwest of what is now China then formed a kingdom known as Hsi-Hsia, whose rulers were the Tanguts. Though perhaps formidable in some ways, this was the least powerful of the three states that occupied Chinese territory, and hence the obvious first target. Then followed raids into the more powerful Chin Empire. These raids – after which, to begin with, the Mongols withdrew back to the steppes – turned by degrees into permanent conquest: the Chin capital, on the site of modern Beijing, fell to the Mongols in

1215, though the definitive conquest of the entire Chin Empire took until 1234, some years after Chinggis Khan's death. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the surprise sometimes expressed at how easily the Mongols seem to have managed to break through the Great Wall of China is misplaced: although the Chin had indeed built walls, there was at the time no 'Great Wall' as such to impede the Mongol advance. The Great Wall that is still to be seen today was built by the Ming dynasty, several centuries later.[3]

In the meantime, Chinggis Khan's attention had been drawn to the west: to the pursuit of one of his most inveterate pre-1206 enemies, Güchlüg of the Naiman tribe. Güchlüg had fled to the Central Asian realm of Qara Khitai,[4] ingratiated himself with its ruler, and then overthrown him and seized power. Apparently originally a member of the Church of the East (often known as the Nestorian Church), he had after his arrival been converted to Buddhism (the religion of the Qara Khitai ruling family), but in a form which he interpreted as permitting him to persecute his many Muslim subjects. Hence when a comparatively small Mongol army crossed the frontier into Qara Khitai in 1218, it had no difficulty in dethroning Güchlüg, who fled, later to be caught and killed. It is perhaps noteworthy that the Qara Khitai realm might be said to have become part of the Mongol Empire 'by the desire of the inhabitants'.[5]

The annexation of Qara Khitai meant that Chinggis Khan's western frontier now ran with that of the empire of the Khwarazm-shah 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad II, which by 1218 included Transoxiana, much of Afghanistan, and most of Iran. At first sight, that empire – the principal successor in the east to the now (except in Anatolia) defunct Seljuq Empire – must have looked formidable. So far as we can judge, that was Chinggis Khan's impression: he made it clear, in diplomatic contacts with the Khwarazm-shah, that at least for the moment he wanted peace and hoped that trade would flourish between the two empires. He referred to the Khwarazm-shah as the ruler of the west, as he himself was of the east (though he also, tactlessly, whether or not intentionally so, described him as 'my son'). Earlier, there had been a perhaps accidental and inconclusive military clash, and it looked as if neither side had any wish for further hostilities. But if that was indeed the case, it was overtaken by events.

A caravan of merchants from Mongolia arrived at the Khwarazmian frontier city of Otrar. The governor, concluding that the merchants were in fact spies (and the two professions were indeed hardly mutually exclusive), killed them and seized their goods. Working, at least overtly, on the assumption that this had been done at the governor's own initiative rather than at his master's behest, Chinggis sent three envoys to protest. Fatefully, the Khwarazm-shah decided to back his governor: he executed the principal ambassador and sent the other two back, having ordered their beards to be shaved of by way of an additional insult. For the Mongols, the person of an ambassador, especially one of their own, was sacrosanct. The Khwarazm-shah's action made war inevitable, as he must surely have realised.

If he did indeed appreciate what would now happen, it is very hard to account for his subsequent behaviour. He appears to have commanded an enormous army, but he made no attempt to use it to face the invading Mongols in battle. Could it be, as has sometimes been suggested, that he feared the army's first act would have been his own deposition? Instead, he distributed his troops in garrisons throughout the cities of his empire. The Mongols invaded in 1219, initiating a campaign that was to last until 1223. They made a carefully coordinated four-pronged attack on Transoxiana. The great cities – Bokhara, Samarqand, Urgenj – were picked off one by one. The garrisons were for the most part killed, but craftsmen were spared, to be shipped off to Mongolia, for their skills to be used in the interests of their new Mongol masters. Cities that surrendered on demand were treated comparatively leniently, while those that resisted were dealt with savagely, as were those cities that, having first submitted, subsequently revolted against Mongol rule. The Khwarazm-shah fled, pursued by a Mongol detachment under Chinggis's leading generals Jebei and Sübodei. He eluded capture, but died on an island in the Caspian Sea.

Mongol forces, now commanded by Chinggis Khan's son Tolui, proceeded further west, into Khorasan. The great cities of that vast province – Marv, Balkh, Herat, Nishapur and so on – fell. The death and destruction inflicted by Tolui's forces was immense, if we are to believe the contemporary sources (which we probably should, at least as far as the general impression they convey is concerned, rather than the improbably high numbers they offer for those massacred). No large Mongol garrisons were left behind in the captured cities: the inexorable advance was what mattered. Timothy May and Michal Biran see this as an example of what they term the 'tidal wave' or 'tsunami' tactic characteristically employed by the Mongols as they expanded. Large areas would be devastated, and a partial withdrawal would follow, with the borderlands held *pro tem* by specialised military units known as *tamma* or *tanma*. The 'broad belt of destruction … protected their territory from future opposition, facilitated their continuous expansion, and created pasture lands'.[6]

Transoxiana was duly incorporated into the Mongol Empire, but Iran was not fully brought under Mongol rule at this stage, though a somewhat incoherent Mongol administration seems to have operated in parts of the country. In 1223 Chinggis set off back towards Mongolia. At first he attempted to return by way of India, but according to the funerary inscription of his Khitan minister Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, he was instructed by a talking unicorn to turn back, and did so. Modern historians of a rationalist inclination have suggested that this animal might have been a rhinoceros,[7] which is zoologically more plausible, though it might be argued that talking rhinoceroses are almost as rare as talking unicorns. Chinggis died in 1227, leaving the fate of Iran to his successors.

The next Great Khan, Chinggis's son Ögödei (r. 1229–41) was more concerned with campaigning in north China, Russia and eastern Europe than

with Iran, though he did make further inroads, in 1230 sending his general Chormaghun into Khorasan, central and northern Iran, and the Caucasus. Numerous cities and local rulers submitted, for the most part with little massacre and destruction – though this was not true of Isfahan, which fell to the Mongols in 1237. At this stage, the Mongol Empire operated as a kind of family firm, in which the various branches of the imperial house all had a role, and relations between those branches were by no means always harmonious. Hence factional struggles over people, territory and influence between generals and administrators representing different interests made properly organised administration difficult; though it should be remarked that there were some Mongol officials who were notable administrators rather than generals attempting to do a little governing on the side. The most significant of these in that early period was perhaps Arghun Aqa, described by George Lane as a 'Mongol bureaucrat', and one who achieved the rather unusual feat of dying long afterwards, of old age.[8] Matters were exacerbated by imperial family contention over the succession after Ögödei's death. His son Güyük was not accepted as Great Khan until 1246, and he died, or was murdered, in 1248, apparently while on his way to fight his cousin Batu, Khan of the Golden Horde (though Hodong Kim has suggested that he may in reality have been setting off to subjugate the Islamic world, including Iran, and other points west).[9]

Another period of political instability followed, to be resolved in 1251 by a coup d'état, which brought to power Möngke, one of the sons of Tolui. Under his rule, imperial expansion and definitive conquest resumed, at both ends of the Mongol Empire. One of his brothers, Qubilai, was commissioned to complete the conquest of China, while another, Hülegü, was sent to Iran, to destroy the Nizari Isma'ilis, also known as the Assassins, and to bring the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad to submission. What else he was expected to do? March on to Egypt? Return to Mongolia? Or create a kingdom for himself in Iran, as he in fact did? The sources are inconclusive.[10]

What may be said of the Mongol impact on Iran, up to the arrival of Hülegü in 1256? The verdict of the great Arab historian Ibn al-Athir, who died in 1233, is often quoted: 'If anyone were to say that since God (glory and power be His) created Adam until this present time mankind has not had a comparable affliction, he would be speaking the truth. History books do not contain anything similar or anything that comes close to it'.[11] Hamd Allah Mostowfi Qazvini, writing a century later, in 1340, at the end of the Ilkhanate, was no less clear in his view. 'There is no doubt' , he wrote, 'that the destruction which happened on the emergence of the Mongol state and the general massacre which occurred at that time will not be repaired in a thousand years, even if no other calamity happens; and the world will not return to the condition in which it was before that event.'[12] Those remarks – from, it may be noted, a Persian bureaucrat who worked for the Mongol regime – are a fair representation of

what has been the traditional view ever since. To what extent may it now be said to be justified?

First, we should appreciate that Chinggis Khan's invasion was inevitably punitive in nature, and that it also served to remove a potential rival power (and as we have seen, it may well be that the Mongols did not realise how insecure the Khwarazm-shah in reality was). Hence it would not in any way be surprising to find that the level of death and destruction inflicted by the Mongols was very high. Just as important as actual deaths in combat or massacres, in all probability, were disruption caused by the impact of floods of refugees, fleeing ahead of the Mongol army, and damage (or even, ultimately, long-term neglect) inflicted on irrigation works, especially qanats. It does seem that the destruction was much more serious than that caused by earlier invaders of Iran such as the Seljuqs. Joseph Fletcher persuasively suggested that, as compared with the Seljuqs, who made their way gradually into Iran, having for long lived on the borders of the Islamic world and having themselves been converted to Islam, the Mongols simply arrived too fast for it to be possible for them to adjust to the conditions of an agrarian and urban society such as Iran, as compared with nomadic Mongolia, predominantly was.[13]

Scepticism about the numbers given by the contemporary Persian sources for the people massacred, particularly in Khorasan, has already been expressed. The highest such figure seems to be that quoted by Juzjani for those killed at Herat: 2.4 million.[14] Other figures are not quite as high as this, but they are comparable. They are certainly not credible as statistics. Herat's late medieval walls still exist in part (or at any rate they did in the 1970s); and they follow the lines of the pre-Mongol walls.[15] The area thus delimited could not possibly have held 2 million people. But that does not mean that these figures should simply be dismissed out of hand. What they show is not mathematical incompetence on the part of the chroniclers. They are evidence, indeed singularly eloquent evidence, of shock. For contemporaries of the Mongol invasion, nothing comparable had ever happened. The destruction wrought by the Mongols was, in their judgement, unparalleled in Iran's historical experience. One should recall that Juzjani gives the size of Chinggis Khan's invading army as 800,000, a figure which is on a scale similar to the massacre figures. It is logistically improbable, as since Mongol cavalry armies travelled on campaign with around five horses per man, the implication of Juzjani's figure is that something like 4 million horses would have had to be fed while the army was marching through Khorasan. Juzjani was of course a highly anti-Mongol writer, who had fled from Khorasan to the safe sanctuary of the Delhi sultanate. But his contemporary Jovayni, who wrote his own history of the Mongol invasion in the same year, 1260, as that in which Juzjani completed his work, does not convey a significantly different impression, except insofar as his account lacks Juzjani's uncomplimentary epithets about the Mongols – and Jovayni was an official who served the Mongols faithfully until his death more

than 20 years later. One should therefore conclude – and there is a great deal more evidence that points in this direction – that there is no justification for playing down the horrors of the first Mongol invasion, especially as it affected Khorasan.

Are there qualifications to this rather negative verdict which ought to be considered? It is certainly important to realise that large parts of Iran submitted to the Mongols on demand, or even voluntarily, and thus escaped destruction or devastation. In much of the country, life probably continued much as before the arrival of the Mongols. Then there is some evidence of speedy recovery, especially in Transoxiana. Ibn al-Athīr remarked about this, under the year 1230–1: 'Their [i.e. the Mongols'] rule became established in Transoxania and the cities there began to be re-populated'.[16] And we ought to recognise that there are elements of rhetoric in contemporary accounts of the destruction, for example the regularity with which cities, we are told, were 'razed to the ground'. Razing a city all the way to the ground, when only pre-modern destructive technology was available, was not in fact as easy as all that, once the wooden buildings had been burned, and if the invaders were in a hurry, as the Mongols generally were. A good example is Bokhara. During the Mongol sack of the city, we are told, a major fire broke out – it is not clear whether this was intentional or accidental. A large proportion of the city was consequently destroyed – but not all of it by any means. If the Mongols had it in mind to raze Bokhara to the ground, they were remarkably unobservant, since they apparently failed to notice the very tall twelfth-century Menar-e Kalan in the centre of the city, the Samanid mausoleum, and other fairly conspicuous structures which are still extant today.

As far as Khorasan is concerned, the tradition, still widely believed, is that the Mongols devastated the province so totally that it has never recovered. Even a quarter of a century ago, it had occurred to me that some part of the decline of Khorasan might plausibly be ascribed to the effects of later events such as warfare between the Mongol khanates, the campaigns of Tamerlane, the Safavid-Özbeg wars of the sixteenth century or the political tumult of the mid-eighteenth century.[17] But more recently, in her book on the Timurids in the second half of the fifteenth century, Maria Subtelny has demonstrated convincingly, on the basis of impeccable documentary evidence, that Khorasan was at that time an exceedingly flourishing agricultural area.[18] This was two-and-a-half centuries after the Mongols had allegedly devastated the province beyond any possible repair.

Hülegü's invasion of Iran in the 1250s was a very different affair from that of his grandfather. There was no blitzkrieg. He moved slowly, and destruction was very limited except in some individual cases - most strikingly at Baghdad, which was treated harshly for particular reasons. Hülegü, after all, was coming to stay, whether or not that was what his brother the Great Khan had originally intended him to do. He could have no interest in destroying his own future

property. And by the 1250s, the Mongols were much better able than they had been in the 1220s to appreciate the point of cities and settled agriculture – not least because of their importance as sources of tax revenue.

What, then was the Mongol contribution to 'The Idea of Iran'? There is perhaps not a great deal to be said so far as the first 30 years of the Mongol impact are concerned. That impact, even if not as totally devastating or universal as was once thought, was overall very far from being positive. The impact of the Ilkhanid regime, from the arrival of Hülegü until the death in the 1330s of the last effective Ilkhan of his line, was a different matter. Scholars have in recent years been reassessing the nature of Ilkhanid rule – a process which has been fruitful, if sometimes its conclusions have been overstated. This to some extent parallels an important development in the study of the Mongol Empire as a whole, which is particularly associated with the remarkable work of Thomas Allsen.[19] This has shown convincingly that, however catastrophic the first Mongol expansion may have been for the conquered, overall there is much more that is positive to say about the Mongols than used to be supposed, especially in respect of the area of cultural transmission, in which the Mongol elite, we can now see, played an active part. A notable contributor to discussion of the 'legacy' issue in relation to Iran has been Bert Fragner, who in various articles has argued, among much else, that in some sense the legacy of the Mongols was modern Iran, in terms of nomenclature (the country became known as 'Iran' for the first time since the Arab conquest), political boundaries, the triumph of the New Persian language over Arabic, the composition of the population and the reinforcement of the nomadic element in it, and so on.[20] But that is a topic for the next stage in considering the evolution of 'The Idea of Iran'.

Notes:

1. See, for example, David Morgan, *The Mongols*, 1st edition (Oxford/New York: Blackwell, 1986), p. 14: corrected in 2nd edition (Oxford/Malden MA: Blackwell, 2007), p. 190.
2. Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier. Nomadic Empires and China* (Oxford/Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1989).
3. A. N. Waldron, *The Great Wall of China. From History to Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
4. On which see Michal Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History. Between China and the Islamic World* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
5. For a Victorian parallel, see W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That* (London: Methuen, 1930), p. 105.
6. Michal Biran, *Chinggis Khan* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), p. 64.
7. Igor de Rachewiltz, 'Yeh-lü Ch'u-tsai (1189–1243); Buddhist Idealist and Confucian Statesman', in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds, *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 194–5. Cf., from the same part of the world in the third millennium BC, the representation on a stone stamp of 'a cow that looks a bit like a unicorn', in Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 67.
8. George Lane, 'Arghun Aqa: Mongol Bureaucrat?' *Iranian Studies* 32:4 (2000), pp. 459–82.
9. Hodong Kim, 'A Reappraisal of Güyüg Khan', in Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran, eds, *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World* (Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), pp. 328–33.
10. Hülegü's conquest of Iran and foundation of the Ilkhanate are beyond the scope of this chapter.
11. D. S. Richards, transl., *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period, Part 3: The Years 589–629/1193–1231: The Ayyubids after Saladin and the Mongol Menace (Crusade Texts in Translation)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 202.
12. Hamd Allah Mostowfi, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, ed. by G. Le Strange (Leiden/London: Brill, 1915), p. 27.
13. Joseph F. Fletcher, 'The Mongols: ecological and social perspectives', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46 (1986), pp. 39–43. Reprinted in Joseph F. Fletcher, *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia*, ed. by Beatrice Forbes Manz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995).
14. Minhaj al-Din Juzjani, *Tabaqat-e Naseri*, ed. by 'A. Habibi, 2 vols (Kabul: Anjoman-e Tarikh-e Afghanestan, 1964–65), vol. 2, p. 121 – transl. H. G. Raverty, *Tabakāt-i-Nāsirī*, 2 vols (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1970 [1881]), vol. 2, p. 1038.
15. Morgan, *The Mongols* (2007), p. 66.
16. Richards, *Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir, Part* 3, p. 303.
17. Morgan, *The Mongols* (2007), pp. 71–2.
18. Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition. Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden/Boston MA: Brill), 2007.
19. Most notably Allsen's *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

20. Bert G. Fragner, 'Iran under Ilkhanid rule in a world history perspective', in Denise Aigle, ed., *L'Iran face à la domination mongole* (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1997), pp. 121–31; 'Ilkhanid Rule and Its Contributions to Iranian Political Culture', in Linda Komaroff, ed., *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden/Boston MA: Brill, 2006), pp. 68–80.

4

Scholarship and Science under the Qara Khitai (1124–1218)

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O ne of the distinctive features of the history of Greater Iran in the period between the Seljuqs to the Mongols was the establishment of the Qara Khitai, or Western Liao Empire, in Central Asia. This unique polity, established by Manchurian nomads who were expelled to Central Asia from north China, managed to govern the mostly Muslim population of Central Asia in rare harmony, despite the 'infidelity' of its rulers. In many ways, it had been a – rather benign – prelude to the coming of the Mongols into the Islamic world. Moreover, the relative stability and prosperity that the Qara Khitai brought to Central Asia enabled the flourishing of Islamic and non-religious scholarship under their reign.[2]

This chapter seeks to shed some light on Muslim intellectual activities under Qara Khitai rule. Based on a variety of Muslim and Chinese literary sources as well as archaeological evidence, and following the careers of twelfth-and thirteenth-century scholars, including migrants from the Qara Khitai realm who were active under Mongol rule, it reconstructs the main fields of knowledge and achievements of Central Asian Muslim scholars under the Qara Khitai and their impact on the later Islamic world, including Iran.

Background: The Qara Khitai

The Kitans, a nomadic people of Manchurian provenance, arrived in Central Asia after more than 200 years of ruling – in Manchuria, Mongolia and parts of north China – as the Liao dynasty (907–1125). In north China the Kitans both maintained their native traditions – such as a nomadic way of life, the Kitan language, and shamanic rituals – and embraced the Chinese imperial tradition, including such of its trappings as reign titles, the calendar, and the Chinese language, which they used alongside Kitan and Turkic. Other major transformations of the Liao period were the invention of two Kitan scripts, large and small; intensive urbanisation, which did not prevent the Kitans from maintaining their nomadic lifestyle (the royal court's seasonal movements continued throughout the Liao period); patronage of Buddhist institutions to enhance the Kitans' legitimacy; the modification of their burial customs; and

the emergence of a unique and sophisticated material culture that revolved around gold.

The Liao Kitans also set up a dual administration, in which the southern branch was responsible for administrating the sedentary population and the northern branch for the nomadic sector. They managed to force the contemporaneous Han Chinese dynasty, the Song (960–1279) to acknowledge them as equal. Thus, the Liao and Song emperors both bore the title 'Son of Heaven' (the Liao emperor as the northern one and his Song counterpart as the southern), in contrast to the traditional Chinese worldview, according to which there is one sun in the sky and one emperor upon earth. Consequently, while preserving much of their original Kitan characteristics and nomadic political culture, the Kitans also managed to portray themselves both inside and outside their realm as no less Chinese than the Song. In fact the word Cathay/Kitad, which derived from the ethnic affiliation (Kitan/Khitai) of the Liao's rulers, became the term for China not only in Mongolia but further west – in medieval Europe, Russia, and the Muslim world. The Liao conducted trade relations with the peoples of Islamic Central Asia, especially the Qarakhanids, with whom they also had marital connections.[3]

In the early twelfth century, when the Liao was overthrown by another wave of Manchurian invaders, the Jurchens, one Khitan prince, Yelü Dashi, chose not to submit to the new rulers. Instead he led his few adherents westwards, hoping to return subsequently and restore the Liao in its former domains. In a little more than a decade he succeeded in setting up a new empire in Central Asia that was known there as the Qara Khitai, and in China as the Western Liao (Xi Liao). The dynasty persisted for nearly 90 years, and was finally vanquished by the Mongols in 1218.

At its height, after defeating the Seljuq Sultan Sanjar in the famous Battle of Qatwān near Samarqand (1141), the Qara Khitai Empire stretched from the Oxus River in western Uzbekistan to the Altai Mountains on the Chinese–Mongolian border. Until 1175, the state's borders ran even further east into the Naiman and Yenisei Qirghiz territories on the fringes of western Mongolia. The population of this vast empire was multi-ethnic and heterogeneous. Besides the Kitans, who constituted but a small minority in their own domain, there were Turks (Uighurs included), Iranians, Mongols, and a few Han Chinese. While most of the populace was sedentary and Muslim, there was an appreciable nomadic component (led by the Kitans themselves), as well as flourishing Buddhist, Nestorian, and even Jewish communities.[4]

In Central Asia the Kitans continued to adhere to Liao-Chinese trappings (languages, symbols of rulership and vassalage) and to Kitan identity markers. In fact, recent philological research and archaeological discoveries suggest that the Kitan character of the Qara Khitai was more pronounced than was previously thought: thus, for example, while the dynasty's name was understood until recently to mean Black Khitai (*Qara* meaning black in Mongolian and Turkic),

Daniel Kane has shown, on the basis of the newly found Kitan inscriptions, that the Mongolian term *hara-kida* was actually a version of the Kitan *xuri*(*s*) *kida*(*n*), the Chinese equivalent of which is the Liao Kitans. This was the name by which the Kitans called themselves on the eve of the Jurchen conquest. This implies that the Liao dynasty in China and Yelü Dashi's state in Central Asia were known by the same name (as reflected in the way in which *The Secret History of the Mongols* and Rashid al-Din treat the two polities).[5] As for archaeology, recent artefacts unearthed in Central Asia attest to the preservation of elements of Kitan material culture, script, and perhaps also historical writing under the Qara Khitai.[6]

Despite these similarities, and due to the impact of the new Central Asian environment, Qara Khitai rule was very different from that of the Liao. First of all, it was far less direct and centralised. Apart from its central territory, most of the Qara Khitai realm was administrated indirectly and in a rather minimalistic way: the local dynasties – most important among them were the Eastern and Western Qarakhanids and the Gaochang Uighurs – remained mainly intact, usually retaining their rulers, titles and armies, and no permanent Qara Khitai troops were stationed in the subject territories. Liao peculiarities such as the dual administration or the five capitals were not retained, and despite the use of Chinese titles, no Chinese bureaucracy existed under the Western Liao. Instead, in a typical Inner Asian amalgamation, the Qara Khitai administration also included Turkic and Persian elements, manifested, for example, in the use of the Persian and Turkic languages in addition to Chinese and Kitan, and in the prevalence of   Turkic and Persian titles among the dynasty's prominent titles, such as *tayangyu* (Turkic: 'chamberlain') and *shihna* (Persian: 'local governor'). Even the ruler's title, *Gürkhan* ('universal khan'), was a hybrid Kitan–Turkic title.[7] Despite these influences, however, and in sharp contrast to their predecessors and successors in Central Asia, throughout their rule the Qara Khitai did not embrace Islam, the dominant religion in their new environment. Instead, they constructed their identity and legitimacy upon a unique combination of a shared nomadic political tradition and the prestige of China in Muslim Central Asia.[8]

Despite the retention of their 'Kitanness' and 'infidelity', the Qara Khitai's shrewd use of their Chinese and nomadic cultural capital, the relative prosperity and stability that they brought to Central Asia, their religious tolerance, and their mainly indirect style of rule, enabled the empire to govern its diverse population effectively, up to the rise of Chinggis Khan.

Until the deterioration of Qara Khitai rule in the early thirteenth century, local Muslim scholars were quite sympathetic towards the infidel rulers.[9] At least two Hanafite scholars even concluded that under the Qara Khitai, Central Asia (or at least Transoxania and Farghana) had remained 'the abode of Islam', as the region did not border the abode of war, and the infidels did not enforce their laws, instead retaining Muslim judges and rulers, and employing Muslim

officials. One of them, Abu Qasim Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Samaqandi (d. 1161) mentioned also that Muslim rulers subject to the infidels were not to be blamed if they had to carry the infidels' tablet of authority (*baiza* from Chinese *paizi*) and don their dress (black clothes and a tall pointed headgear [*sarāghuj*]. These items, explains al-Samarqandi, were merely symbols of authority, and had nothing to do with religion.[10] The second scholar, Abu Bakr al-Marghinani (d. after 1253), even blessed the infidels, saying: 'May God give them what will make them fortunate in this world and in the next (*atāhum Allāh mā yusʿiduhum bihi fī al-dārayn*)'.[11] This striking positive attitude towards non-Muslim rulers is probably related to the vigorous flourishing of Muslim intellectual activities under Qara Khitai rule.

I will review, first, Islamic scholarship, and then the non-religious sciences. The scarcity of relevant documentation – both literary and archaeological – suggests that this picture will be far from complete, but the vitality of the intellectual life in this period will hopefully be manifested.

Islamic Scholarship

Qara Khitai rule did not limit the expansion of Islam. On the contrary, the large size of the empire and the relative peace within it facilitated further Muslim infiltration into Inner Asia. Thus, for example, under the Qara Khitai, Islam prevailed for the first time in the regions of Qayaliq (south Kazakhstan) and Almaliq (northwest Xinjiang, China), where the Qarluq rulers embraced it before the early thirteenth century. Many Muslims existed among the Uighurs, and Muslim merchants reached all the way to Mongolia and North China.[12]

Islamic scholarship flourished under the Qara Khitai even in their capital, Balasaghun; in cities of eastern Turkestan such as Kashgar and Khotan – the latter allegedly having more than 3,000 illustrious *imāms* in the early thirteenth century;[13] and, most of all, in the much better-documented Transoxania and Farghana, where local Muslim rulers and officials served as its main patrons.

Al-Samʿani (d. 1166), Fakhr al-Din Razi (d. 1206) and ʿAwfi (d. 1232), all of whom were scholars who spent at least several years in Qara Khitai's Transoxania in the second half of the twelfth century, give first-hand evidence of the vigour of Muslim scholarship in this period – a fact attested also by contemporaneous tomb inscriptions.[14] While religious scholarship included prophetic traditions (*Hadīth*) and Qur'anic studies, Arabic grammar, literature, genealogy, theology and philosophy,[15] the main strength of Central Asian scholarship remained Hanafi law. A central place in the scholarly community and its networks of patronage was played by the Burhan family, also known as Banu Maza – leading Hanafi jurists who held the position of *sadr* (eminent person, local leader). They became the Gürkhan's officials, and as such were responsible for collecting his taxes from Bukhara. The sources' claims that they were patrons of 4,000 or 6,000 jurist scholars may be exaggerated, but ʿAwfi's first-hand descriptions of the many scholars who enjoyed Burhanid patronage (himself included) leave no doubt

regarding the important position they held among Bukhara's scholarly community. The fame of the Burhan family – both scholarly and political – was also known outside Transoxania, as attested by the reception of the Burhanid *sadr* in Baghdad in 1206, when he led the pilgrims of Khurasan.[16] Even into the late thirteenth century, scholars from both Central Asia and further westwards – from Iran to Syria – were proud to mention that they had studied with the *sadrs*.[17]

While the Burhanid position was indeed exceptional, the local ᶜulama' continued to enjoy both scholarly and social prestige: nearly every town in Central Asia had its own Sheikh al-Islam, or leading scholar, who enjoyed great respect, while even lesser scholars had considerable retinues of students and followers, estimated at several hundred persons.[18] Public discussion of legal, theological and philosophical issues was quite common, and attracted large crowds.[19] Study was practised in colleges (*madaris*), mosques and private houses, where study sessions (*majalis*) took place often within a certain circle (*halqa*) of scholars. Major scholarly centres included Bukhara, Samarqand and Nasaf, but many scholars were of rural background, originating in the various villages around these cities.[20]

Closely connected to the Transoxanian community was the Muslim centre of Farghana, which in the Qara Khitai period produced prominent Hanafi legal scholars such as Qadi Khan (d. 1196) and al-Marghinani (d. 1197), the compiler of the celebrated *Hidaya* and student of the Burhanid *sadrs*, whose son's sympathetic attitude to the infidel rulers was cited above.[21] Late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century inscriptions from Uzgand and Safid Bulana (near Awsh in Farghana), as well as ᶜAwfi's descriptions, attest that the towns had flourishing Islamic communities.[22] The religious scholars remained leaders of the local population, mediating between the city dwellers and local rulers or occasional invaders, while quite a few held administrative posts in the Qarakhanid (and sometimes also the Qara Khitai) government, and later also in Chaghadai's court.[23]

The Qara Khitai realm remained connected to other centres in the Muslim world through pilgrimage and travels in search of knowledge, and attracted a considerable amount of students from outside. Especially close connections existed with Khurasan, but western Iran and Iraq – and even India and Syria – were also among the places visited by Central Asian scholars, and from which people came to study in Central Asia. Yet the Transoxanian scholars often looked down on other centres of knowledge (Iraq and Khurasan) – a fact that infuriated Fakhr al-Din al-Razi.[24]

Professor Shahab Ahmad, who, based on a unique bibliography compiled by a certain Mahmud Faryabi in mid- to late twelfth-century Bukhara, analysed the intellectual horizons of the Bukharan scholarly community of that time, concluded that the intellectual tradition there was mainly regional. He stressed the central position of Khurasanian and Transoxanian works in the bibliography available for Bukharan scholars (61 out of the 76 identified books in the bibliography originated in these centres, nine other works originated in western Iran, and

there was one each from Baghdad, Mosul, Damascus and Egypt). This division ignores the political boundaries between Transoxania and Khurasan, but creates a discernible northeastern regional tradition.[25] Some of the works produced in Qara Khitai Transoxania continued to be part of the Iranian and Central Asian curriculum up to the Timurid period.[26] With the Mongol whirlwind, however, as many scholars escaped from the incoming troops of Chinggis Khan or the later upheavals in the Chaghadaid realm, refugees and migrants disseminated their regional traditions throughout the Muslim world. Thus Qadi Khan, al-Marghinani, the Burhan family – and even their best students, such as Shams al-A'ima' al-Kardari (d. 1246 in Bukhara) – continued to be studied and appreciated in Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and even India and China.[27] The regional Transoxanian–Khurasanid tradition therefore became much more widespread and relevant in large areas of the Muslim world.

The same phenomenon is attested regarding Sufi activities: Sufis, some of them also renowned ʿulama', were quite active in the Qara Khitai realm, although we know very little about their whereabouts.[28] The centres of Sufism were on the fringes of the Qara Khitai realm, in Khwarazm, where the leading figure was Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1220 during the Mongol onslaught) and Balkh, the dwelling place of Baha' al-Din Walad, father of Jalal al-Din Rumi. Again, after the Mongol invasion, while a considerable Sufi community remained in Central Asia – leading to the conversion of, among others, Berke Khan (r. 1257–67), the first Mongol prince to adopt Islam – many of the eminent Sufi disciples migrated westwards and southwards, where they had a memorable impact on the later development of Islamic mysticism. Kubrawi disciples settled not only in Bukhara, but also in India, where they established the local branch known as the Firdawsiyya, and in Khurasan. From there the order expanded to Iran, where major figures such as ʿAla' al-Din Simnani (d. 1336) and the Sheikh Ibrahim b. Hamuya (d. 1322), who converted Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 1295–1304), were active later in the Ilkhanate. Baha al-Dīn Walad migrated to Konia, where Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–73) became a leading figure. The father of Nizam al-Din Awliya (1243–1345), the founder of the Indian Chishti order, was a Bukharan Sufi who left Tranoxania for Delhi on the eve of Chinggis Khan's invasion.[29]

Sciences: Non-Religious Scholarship

Non-religious scholarship also flourished in Qara Khitai Central Asia, and was often practised by the same people, as many religious scholars were polymaths, specialising also in various kinds of sciences. A good example is the physician of the Qara Khitai court, the judge (*qadi*) Shams al-Din Mansur b. Masʿud al-Uzgandi, who was also well versed in astronomy, a notable poet, and a military commander. It is no wonder that, when he offered his services to the Qara Khitai, they were glad to hire him, and he became a close companion of the rulers and their officials.[30]

Scientists were in high demand in the eastern Islamic world: Nizami-yi ᶜArudi Samarqandi, a contemporary of the Qara Khitai active mainly in the Ghurid realm, in his 'Four Discourses', treats four classes of men whose services were deemed essential to every king: secretaries, poets, astronomers and physicians. Medicine and astronomy were also highly regarded by nomadic and Chinese rulers, due to their functions of healing and reading the will of heaven.[31] Indeed these fields flourished in the Qara Khitai realm, often under the auspices of their vassal rulers or officials.

Medicine was a popular occupation, in continuation of the tradition of Ibn Sina (d. 1030) – especially in Samarqand, where one of the first Islamic hospitals was established by the Qarakhanid rulers in the eleventh century.[32] The medical works of Badr al-Din al-Qalanisi al-Samarqandi (d. 1194) and of Hamid Muhammad b. ᶜAbdallah Najib al-Din al-Samarqandi (d. 1222) are extant, and both doctors are recorded in biographical dictionaries written further west.[33] In addition, ᶜAwfi provides us with information on various other doctors, including his maternal uncle, Majd al-Din ᶜAdnan, the 'King of the Doctors', whose family specialised in providing medical care to local rulers for several generations.[34] Medical works were studied in colleges, but the practice was learnt by apprenticeship. According to ᶜAwfi, for a highly talented student, the training took four years.[35]

The presence of astronomy is less prominent in the contemporaneous literature, although Fakhr al-Dīn al-Razi's attack on astrology was not well received in Transoxania,[36] and the reference to the above-mentioned Shams al-Din al-Uzgandi, as well as Nizami-yi ᶜArudi's description of the woman astrologer in his service, attests to its presence.[37] Several astronomical works from the eastern Islamic world (Khwarazm and Ghazna)[38] survived, but the main evidence for the prominence of astronomy in the region comes from the Mongol period: when the Daoist patriarch Changchun arrived in Samarqand to meet Chinggis Khan, he met 'the head of the observatory', a certain Mr Li. While this Chinese astronomer might have come to Central Asia with the Mongols, the Muslim astronomers, whose work was highly appreciated in the same period by Yelü Chucai, Chinggis Khan's Kitan advisor and astrologer, were certainly local.[39] Jamal al-Din al-Bukhari, whom the Mongol Qa'an Möngke (r. 1251–59) invited to establish an observatory in Mongolia and who eventually founded one in Yuan China, was probably also educated in Transoxania.[40] The descriptions of Iranian astronomers who originated in or visited Mongol Bukhara, and the presence of Khotanid and Kashgarid astronomers in the thirteenth-century Maragha observatory, attest to the high level of astronomical studies in pre-Mongol Central Asia.[41] This is another clear case in which Mongol upheavals disseminated Central Asian knowledge across Eurasia and into Iran and China.

Mathematics was also practised in the Qara Khitai realm, and in the late twelfth century one of the members of the Burhanid family, Muhammad b.

ᶜUmar b. Masᶜud, specialised in algebra, geometry and mathematics, and solved Euclidian and Aristotelian problems.[42]

In the humanities, many poets were active in Transoxania, and even further eastward. None of these poets reached the stature of contemporaneous Iranian luminaries such as Anwari (d. 1189), Khaqani (d. 1190), Farid al-Din ᶜAttar (1145–1221) and Saᶜdi (1210–91/92), but some of them, such as Suzani Samarqandi (d. 1166), won certain fame even in the larger Iranian world. These poets made their living by panegyrising their various patrons (local rulers, commanders, the Burhanid *sadrs*), competed with each other, and reflected on the era's upheavals.[43] As shown by ᶜAwfi, writing poetry was also a favourable activity of rulers and officials.[44] In terms of historiography, the revised edition of Narshakhi's *Tarikh-yi Bukhara* was dedicated to the Burhanid *sadr* in 1178, and a history of Turkestan was compiled (but did not survive) by ᶜAwfi's uncle Majd al-Din ᶜAdnan – the 'King of the Doctors' mentioned above. Around 1160, the *Sindbad namah*, a more literary work, was also dedicated to the Qarakhanid ruler Masᶜud b. Hasan.[45] All types of scientific and literary activity certainly thrived in the Qara Khitai realm.

The Qara Khitai's Contribution

How much of these flourishing intellectual activities can be ascribed to the Qara Khitai? Indirectly, they provided the political and economic conditions that enabled them, and their religious tolerance and respect for scholars were also highly beneficial. But was there a more direct impact? Can we locate some specific effect of the unusual rulers who stressed their connection to China? The scarce documentation and the indirect rule of the Qara Khitai complicate the task of answering this question, or in general assessing the impact the Qara Khitai had on Central Asia, but a few tentative remarks are in order.

First, throughout the reign of the Western Liao, the blurred boundaries between China and Central Asia, and the Muslim perception of Central Asia as a part of China (or vice versa), continued and were even strengthened. Thus, in 1206 Fakr al-Din Mubarak Shah defined China (*Chīn*) as part of Turkestan,[46] while both Kashgar and Balasaghun (the Qara Khitai capital in modern Kyrgyzstan) are described as cities of China in twelfth-century and later geographical works.[47] Francesco Calzolaio, who recently studied the representations of the Chinese world in Awfi's work, notes that even when retelling past anecdotes Awfi often replaces the ethnonym 'Turk' mentioned by his sources with 'the Chinese', thereby attesting to the growing affinity of the two groups among Qara Khitai subjects.[48] The title Tamghaj Khan (Turkic: the Khan of China) remained popular among the Qarakhanids, who were Qara Khitai vassals.[49] Moreover, in four epitaphs from Samarqand and Balasaghun, the title *Mufti al-sharq (or al-mashriq) wa'l-Sin*, the Mufti (jurisconsult) of the East and of China, is inscribed,[50] attesting to the religious elite's acknowledgement of a certain Chinese connection (or even identity).

Another facet of Chinese influence is in the realm of architecture: Liao motives are attested in the twelfth-century ᶜAisha Bibi Mausoleum in Talas, which was an important Qara Khitai centre,[51] and some of the murals of the recently excavated twelfth-century Qarakhanid palace in Afrasiyab are reminiscent of Dunhuang models, thereby implying Buddhist–Turkestani influence (but Iranian content). They were described as early examples of Ilkhanid paintings, in which Chinese influence is of course apparent.[52]

Moreover, some of the Muslims who fulfilled important posts in the Qara Khitai administration might have acquired a degree of knowledge of Kitan or Chinese: we know that Mahmud Yalawach, Chinggis Khan's famous minister, who may or may not be identical with Mahmud Tai, the vizier of the last Gürkhan, spoke Chinese (though he might have acquired it after the Mongol conquest) – and the same was true of a few commanders and scholars of eastern origin who were active in Ilkhanid Iran, some of them perhaps of Qara Khitai origin.[53] Scholars and scientists who served the Qara Khitai were probably exposed to their diverse courtiers – among whom the Uighurs, a well-educated community whose members served as the tutors of the Qara Khitai princes, played an important role.[54] Furthermore, the emergence of female rulers in the thirteenth-century eastern Islamic world, most of them having Kitan connections (a topic that lies beyond the scope of this chapter)[55] suggests that the influence of the Qara Khitai on their new environment might have been deeper than the external sources enable us to detect.

Conclusion

While it is not easy to assess the full impact of the Qara Khitai on the Iranian world between the Seljuq and the Mongol periods, it can be argued that they gave the *coup-de-grâce* to Sanjar's rule, thereby putting an end to the power of the Seljuqs in eastern Iran. What is more, their reign can be seen as a prelude to the Mongol invasion. Much less violent than that of the Mongols, Qara Khitai rule proved to the Central Asian Muslims that infidel rulers could be tolerated, and might have introduced them to some elements in the Chinese world order, notably the Chinese language. Both features facilitated the later inclusion of Central Asian and Iranian Muslims in the Mongol Empire, and enabled them to benefit fully from the opportunities opened up by the Mongol period.

More importantly, the relative stability and prosperity that the Qara Khitai brought to Central Asia enabled the flourishing of both religious and scientific activity under their rule, especially in the fields of Hanafi law, Sufism, medicine and astronomy. With the upheavals of the Mongol invasions and the relative instability of the Chaghadaid Khanate – the Mongol state in Central Asia – the educated elite of the Qara Khitai realm dispersed across Eurasia, thereby disseminating the regional intellectual and technical achievements of the period, and making them an important part of Muslim scholarship in Iran, the Muslim world and beyond.

Notes:

1. This study was supported by grant 602/12 of the Israel Science Foundation, and made use of the database of the ERC Project *Mobility, Empire and Cross Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia* (Grant Agreement n. 312397).

2. On the Qara Khitai, see M. Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History: Between China and the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Wei Liangtao (魏良弢), *Kalahan wang chao shi, Xi Liao shi* (喀喇汗王朝史，西辽史) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2010).

3. For the Liao see, for example, V. Hansen, F. Louis, and D. Kane, eds, *Perspectives on the Liao, Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, XLIII (2013); Shen Hsueh-man, ed., *Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China's Liao Empire (907–1125)* (Milano: Five Continents and New York: Asia Society, 2006); D. Twitchett and K.-P. Tietze, 'The Liao', in D. Twitchett and H. Franke, eds, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States 907–1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 43–153; Karl A. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao (907–1125)* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1949); Liu Pujiang (刘浦江), *Song mo zhi jian: Liao Jin Qidan Nüzhen shi yan jiu* (松漠之间：遼金契丹女真史研究) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008); Liu Pujiang (刘浦江), *Liao Jin shi lun* (遼金史論) (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1999). For the Kitan language, see D. Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). On Liao relations with the Muslim world, see M. Biran, 'Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce and Mutual Perceptions', *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* XLIII (2013), pp. 221–251.

4. For more on the Kitans in West Asia, see Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*. On the Jurchens, see, for example, H. Franke, 'The Chin Dynasty', in D. Twitchett and H. Franke, eds, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States 907–1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 215–320.

5. D. Kane, 'The Great Central Liao Kitan State', in Hansen and Louis, *Perspectives on the Liao*, *Collection of Papers Prepared for the Yale-Bard Graduate Center Conference, September 30 to October 2, 2010* (New Haven/New York, 2010), p. 7. This paragraph, however, does not appear in his published article: D. Kane, 'The Great Central Liao Kitan State', *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* XLIII (2013), pp. 27–50.

6. V. P. Zaytsev, 'Rukopisnaiia kniga bol'shogo kidan'skogo pis'ma iz kollektsii Instituta vostochnyx rukopisei RAN', *Pis'mennye Pamiatniki Vostoka* 2: 15 (Autumn–Winter 2011), pp. 130–50; Idem, 'Identifikatsiia kidans'ckovo istoricheskovo sochineniia v sostave rukopisnoi knigi-kodeksa Nova N 176 iz kollektsii IBR RAN i coputstvuiushtsie problem', *Acta linguistica Petropolitana*, XI:3 (2015), pp. 167–208. Zaytsev analyses a book in the large Kitan script, unearthed in Kyrgyzstan. This is the only extant Kitan book, and by far the longest text of the Kitan large script. He suggested that the book is composed of several distinct compilations, one of them is the Kitan veritable records (*shilu*, the records subsequantly used for compiling a dynastic history) of the first nine Liao emperors, while another is a collection of corresponding biographies. Unfortunately the book remains mostly undeciphered. See also Franz Grenet, 'Maracanda/Samarkand, une métropole pré-mongole: Sources écrites et archéologie', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* LIX (2004), p. 1,064, which mentions the fragments of a gilded silver saddle ornament featuring a Liao dragon motif found in Samarqand and not yet published. For Qara Khitai coins, see V. A. Belyaev, V. Nastich and S. V. Sidorovich, 'The Coinage of Qara Khitay: A New Evidence', in B. Callegher and A. d'Ottone, eds, *Proceedings of the Third Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic*

Coins, Rome, 23–24 September 2011 (Trieste: EUT, 2012), pp. 128–43 (at https://independent.academia.edu/OTSGroup, last accessed on 31 July 2017).

7. M. Biran, 'Between China and Islam: The Administration of the Qara Khitai Empire', in D. Sneath, ed., *Imperial Statecrafts: Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth–Twentieth Centuries* (Bellingham, WA: Western Washington University Press, 2006), pp. 63–84. Kane recently suggested that the *Gür* element of the *Gürkhan* derives from Kitan **gur*, state (in this respect 'all-under-heaven', and hence 'universal Khan', as explained in the *Secret History* and Muslim sources); *khan* is a Turkic word meaning 'ruler'. To the best of my knowledge, this title was not in use in the Liao dynasty. D. Kane, 'Khitan and Jurchen', in A. Pozzi, J. Janhunen and M. Weiers, eds, *Tumen jalafun jecen akū: Manchu studies in honour of Giovanni Stary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), pp. 124–25.

8. M. Biran, 'True to Their Ways: Why the Qara Khitai Did Not Convert to Islam', in R. Amitai and M. Biran, eds, *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 175–99.

9. Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 171–201, esp. p. 191.

10. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Samarqandī, *al-Multaqaṭ fī al-fatāwā al-Ḥanafiyya*, ed. M. Naṣṣār and Y. Aḥmad (Beirut: Manshūrāt Muḥammad ᶜAlī Bayḍūn and Dār al-Kutub al-ᶜIlmiyya, 2000), pp. 254–55. I thank Dr. Zafar Najmadinov of The Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences for bringing the text to my attention.

11. Abū al-Fatḥ Abū Bakr ᶜAbd al-Jalīl al-Marghīnānī (d. after 651/1253), *Fatāwā fuṣūl al-ihkām fī uṣūl al-al-ahkām* (Calcutta: Asiatic Lithographic Press, 1827), pp. 17–18. My thanks to Yohanan Friedman for providing me with this important text; see his forthcoming article, 'ᶜ*Dār al-Islām* and *dār al-harb* in Modern Indian Muslim Thought', in G. Calasso and G. Lancioni, eds, *Dar al-Islam / Dar al-Harb: Territories, Peoples, Identities* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). On the author, the son or grandson of the famous Ṣāḥib al-Hidāya (about whom see below), see, for example, al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya* (Giza: Hajr, 1993), vol. 4, p. 74; Laknawī, *al-Fawāʾid al-bahiyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaᶜat al-saᶜāda, 1906), pp. 146–47; W. Heffening, 'al-Marghīnānī', *EI2* 6 (1991), pp. 557–58.

12. Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, p. 177.

13. Juwaynī, *Taʾrīkh-i jahān gushā*, ed. M. M. Qazwīnī (Leiden/London: Brill, 1912–37), vol. 1, p. 53 – transl. J. A. Boyle as *Chinggis Khan: The History of World Conqueror* (reprinted, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 71.

14. L. N. Dodkhudoeva, *Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Samarkanda XI–XIV vv. Tom 1* (Dushanbe: Donish 1992), pp. 132–210 (inscriptions 25–115); for discussion of the curriculum, see especially pp. 157, 161, 186. See also V. N. Nastits, 'K epigraficheskoi istorii Balasaguna', in V. A. Livshits, V. M. Ploskikh and V. D. Goriacheva, eds, *Krasnaia Rechka i Burana* (Frunze: Ilim, 1989), pp. 158–77; V. N. Nastits, 'Arabskie i Persidskie nadpisi na kajrakakh s gorodishcha Burana', in E. A. Davidovitch, ed., *Kirgiziia pri Karakhanidakh* (Frunze: Izd-vo Ilim, 1983), pp. 221–34. For the three authors, see below.

15. Al-Samᶜānī, *Kitāb al-ansāb*, ed. ᶜA. ᶜA. al-Bārūdī (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 141, 145, 156; vol. 2, pp. 95, 332; vol. 3, pp. 547; vol. 5, pp. 17, 19, 27, 104; al-Samᶜānī *Taḥbīr* (Baghdad: Maṭbaᶜat al-irshād, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 534; vol. 2, pp. 86–7, 172, 234–6, 261, 272, 350. See also al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, p. 314; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī fī bilād Mā Warāʾ al-Nahr*, in F. Kholeif, ed. and transl., *A Study of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxania* (Beirut: Dār al-mashriq, 1966), esp. pp. 49, 53; ᶜAwfī, *Lubāb al-albāb*, ed. S. Nafīsī (Tehran: kitābkhānahyi Ibn Sīnā, 1954), p. 154.

16. See, for example, ʿAwfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 155, 178, 517; Zakariya b. Muḥammad Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-ʿibād* (Beirut: Dār sādir, 1380/1960), p. 510; Nasawī, *Sīrat al-sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Mankubirtī*, ed. H. A. Hamdī (Cairo: Dār al-fikr al-ʿarabī, 1953), p. 68; Sibt b. al-Jawzī, *Mirā't al-zamān fī taʾrīkh al-aʿyān* (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿat majlis dāiʾrat al-maʿārif al-ʿuthmāniyya, 1370–71/1951–52), vol. 8/2, p. 529; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa al-sābiʿ al-maʿrūf bi'l-dhayl ʿalā al-rawdatayn*, ed. M. Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktab nashr al-thaqāfa al-islāmiyya 1947), p. 57; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh* (Beirut: Dār sādir, 1965–67), vol. 12, p. 257; Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-mukhtaṣar*, vol. 9, ed. M. Djawād [sic] and Anastase Marie de St Elie (Baghdad: Impremerie Syrienne Catholique, 1934), p. 202. See also Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 184–85.

17. See, for example, al-Tamīmī al-Dārī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-sunniyya* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-aʿlā li'l-shuʾūn al-islāmiyya, 1970), vol. 1, p. 439; al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, p. 259; al-Samaʿnī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, pp. 198–99; D. V. Goriacheva and V. N. Nastits, 'Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Safid Bulana XII–XIV vv', *Epigrafika Vostoka* XXII (1984), p. 66.

18. Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, for example p. 58 (p. 80 in the translation).

19. Ibid., for example pp. 48–52, 58 (pp. 70–75, 80 in the translation).

20. See, for example, al-Samaʿnī, *Ansāb*, vol. 1, pp. 145, 156, 217, 461; vol. 3, pp. 86–87, 547; vol. 5, pp. 17, 27, 101; al-Samʿānī, *Taḥbīr*, vol. 1, pp. 446, 534.

21. Al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, pp. 93–94, 213, 259, 323; vol. 3, p. 628; T. W. Joynboll and Y. Linant de Bellefonds, 'Ḳāḍī Khān', *EI2* 4 (1978), p. 377; Heffening, ʿal-Marghīnānī', pp. 557–58.

22. Goriacheva and Nastits, ʿSafid Bulana', pp. 61–72; D. V.Goriacheva, *Srednevekovye gorodskie tsentry i arkhitekturnye ansambli Kirgizii* (Frunze: Izd-vo Ilim 1983), pp. 93–103; ʿAwfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 161–62, 165–66.

23. For the Qara Khitai, see Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 183–85; for the Chaghadaids, see, for example, Juwaynī, *Jahān gushā*, vol. 2, pp. 227–32; transl. Boyle, *Chinggis Khan*, pp. 272–76; Khwāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, transl. W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1994), vol. 3, pp. 44–46; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs majmaʾ al-ādāb fī muʾjam al-alqāb*, ed. M. Jawwād (Damascus: al-Matbaʿa al-Hāshimiyya, 1962–65), vol. 4.2, pp. 903, 1,106; vol. 4.4, p. 626.

24. Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, p. 14 (p. 36 in the translation); and see, for example, al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, p. 314; vol. 3, pp. 431–32; Samʿānī, *Taḥbīr*, vol. 1, pp. 243, 403, 446, 553; vol. 2, pp. 42–43, 210; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-islām* (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿArabī 1995), vol. 50, pp. 254, 295; Nasawī, *Sīrat al-Sultān*, p. 68; Sibt b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾat al-zamān*, vol. 8/2, p. 529; Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, pp. 57, 59; Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, p. 202; al-Balkhī, *Faḍāʾil-yi Balkh*, ed. ʿA. Ḥābībī (Tehran: Bunyād-yi farhang-yi Irān, 1972), p. 370.

25. Shahab Ahmad, 'Mapping the World of a Scholar in Sixth/Twelfth Century Bukhārā: Regional Tradition in Medieval Islamic Scholarship as Reflected in a Bibliography', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* CXX (2000), pp. 23–43.

26. M. E. Subtelny, 'The Making of Bukhara al-Sharif: Scholars, Books and Libraries in Medieval Bukhara: The Library of Khwaja Muhammad Parsa', in D. Deweese, ed., *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel* (Bloomington, IN, 2001), pp. 79–111; M. E. Subtelny and A. B. Khalidov, 'The Curriculum of Islamic Higher Learning in Timurid Iran in the Light of the Sunni Revival under Shāh-Rukh', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* CXV (1995), pp. 210–36.

27. See, for example, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina* (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadītha, 1966), vol. 2, p. 360; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh,* vol. 60, p. 490; vol. 58, pp. 87, 116–17; vol. 59, p. 97; vol. 57, pp. 86, 266; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs*, vol. 4.3, p. 451; vol. 4.4, p. 844; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb fī muʿjam al-alqāb*, ed. M. al-Kāzim (Tehran: Muʾassasat al-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr, 1995), vol. 4, p. 531; vol. 5, p. 102; ; al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*, ed. ʿA. b. Abū Zayd (Beirut/Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1998), vol. 1, p. 171; vol. 5, p. 365.
28. Samʿānī, *Ansāb*, vol. 1, p. 217; vol. 3, p. 432; Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, p. 323; Dodkhudoeva, *Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Samarkanda*, pp. 136, 138, 142, 172, 179.
29. Liu, Xinru, 'A Silk Road Legacy: The Spread of Buddhism and Islam', *Journal of World History* XXII (2011), pp. 76–78; H. Algar, 'Kubrā', *EI2* (Brill Online, 2014).
30. ʿAwfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 165–66 [a prototype to the Mongol-period polimaths?].
31. Niẓāmī-yi ʿArūḍī, *Chahār maqāla, e*d. M. Qazwīnī and M. Muʿīn (Tehran: Kitābfurūsh zawār, 1952), pp. 54–88 – transl. E. G. Browne (London: Luzac and co, 1921), pp. 62–96; T. T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 141–75 (albeit for the Mongol period).
32. See, for example, S. Souchek, *Inner Asia: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 85.
33. C. Brockelman, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur. Supplementband* (Leiden: Brill, 1938), pp. 893, 895–96; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibāʾ, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Dār maktabat al-ḥayāt, 1965), vol. 2, p. 472; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī biʾl-wafayāt, ed. M. ʿA. al-Bahīt and M. al-Ḥiyārī (Beirut: al-Maʿhad al-islāmī liʾl-abḥāth al-sharqiyya 2008), vol. 2, p. 273.
34. ʿAwfī, Lubāb, pp. 154–57.
35. ʿAwfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 154–55.
36. Al-Rāzī, Munāẓarāt, pp. 32–34 (pp. 56–57 in translation).
37. ʿAwfī, *Lubāb*, p. 165; Niẓāmī-yi ʿArūḍī, pp. 59–60, transl. Browne, pp. 67–68.
38. Brockelman, *Geschichte, sup 1,* pp. 683, 685.
39. Li Zhichang (李志常), *Changchun xi you ji* (長春西游記), in Wang Guowei (王國維), *Wang Guowei yi shu* (王國維遺書) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji shudian, 1983), vol. 13, pp. 328–29; transl. A. Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist* (London: G. Routledge & sons, ltd., 1931), pp. 94–95, 97; Su, Tianjue (蘇天爵), *Yuan wenlei* (元文類) (Taipei: Shijie shuju yingxing, 1967), Chapter 57, p. 22b.
40. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*, ed. B. Karīmī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1338/1959), vol. 2, p. 718 – transl. W. M. Thackston, *Jamiʿ - ʾuʾt-tawarikh [*sic*] Compendium of Chronicles* (Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1998–99), vol. 2, pp. 501–2; Song, Lian (宋濂), *Yuan shi* (元史) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju , 1976), Chapter 7, p. 136; Chapter 90, p. 2,297. On Jamāl al-Dīn, see Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, p. 167ff.
41. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs*, vol. 4.4, pp. 704–5; Idem, *Majmaʿ*, vol. 1, p. 246–47; M. Fallahzadeh, *Persian Writing on Music: A Study of Persian Musical Literature from 1000 to 1500 AD* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala Press, 2005), p. 98. The Marāgha observatory was established in the 1260s by Hülegü.
42. ʿAwfī, *Lubāb*, p. 151; see also Brockelman, *Geschischte*, Supp1, p. 680.
43. ʿAwfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 500–25.
44. Ibid., pp. 23–70.
45. Ibid., pp. 154–55; al-Kātib al-Samarqandī, *Sindbād nāmah*, ed. A. Ates (Istanbul: Vizāizsti Farhang, 1948); Muhammad Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-yi Bukhārā*, ed. C. Schefer (Paris: E. Leroux, 1892), transl. R. N. Frye, *History of Bukhara* (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1954).

46. Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh, *Ta'rīkh-i Fakhru'd-Dīn Mubārakshāh* [sic], ed. E. Denison Ross (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1927), p. 39. See also the title of the map, since lost, quoted on p. 61: 'The Country of China: Map of Turkestan and Transoxania' (*Bilād al-Ṣīn: ṣūrat Turkestān wā-Mā warā' al-nahr*). On the blurred boundaries between China and Central Asia before the Qara Khitai, see Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 97–101.

47. Ibn Funduq (late twelfth century), *Tārīkh-yi Bayhaq* (Tehran: Bangā-yi dānish, 1938), pp. 5, 53; Ibn al-Dawādārī (fourteenth century), *Kanz al-Durar*, vol. 7 (Cairo: Dār iḥyā' al-kutub al-ᶜarabiyya, 1972), p. 238.

48. F. Calzolaio, 'A Boundless Text for a Boundless Author**:** The Representation of the Chinese World in Sadīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ᶜAwfī's Jawāmiᶜ al-Ḥikāyāt wa Lawāmi al-Riwāyāt, *Studi e ricerche* IX (2017), pp. 109–29, esp. 124–26.

49. Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 100–1. For the Qarakhanid connections with the Sinitic states (Song, Liao, Jin), see M. Biran, 'Qarakhanid Eastern Trade: Preliminary Notes on the Silk Roads in the 11th–12th centuries, ' in J. Bemmann and M. Schmauder, eds, *The Complexity of Interaction along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the first Millennium CE. Empires, Cities, Nomads and Farmers* (Bonn: Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 2015), pp. 575–95.

50. Dodkhudoeva, *Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Samarkanda*, pp. 156, 179; M. Hartmann, 'Archaeologisches aus Russisch–Turkestan – III', *Orientalistische Literatur-Zeitung* IX (1906), pp. 297–304; Nastits, 'K epigrafitseskoi istorii Balasaghuna', pp. 225, 232–33.

51. V. D. Goriacheva and S. I. Peregudova, *Pamiatniki istorii i kyltyry Talaskoi doliny* (Bishkek: Kyrgyzstan, 1995), pp. 62–68; M. Kervran, 'Un monument baroque dans les steppes du Kazakhstan: le tombeau d'Orkina Khatun, princesse Chaghatay?', *Arts Asiatique* LVII (2002), pp. 5–32, esp. pp. 12–13. Kervran suggested an identification of this building with the mausoleum of Orghina Khatun (r. 1251–59), because of the multifaceted Chinese influence on its architecture. This conjecture, however, has no textual or any other basis, and is opposed to the opinion of the local archaeologists cited above.

52. Yuri Karev, 'Qarakhanid Wall Paintings in the Citadel of Samarqand: First Report and Preliminary Observations', *Muqarnas* XXII (2005), pp. 45–84; F. Grenet, 'The Discovery of the Court Culture of the Qarakhanids (XIth – Beginning of XIIIth Centuries)', talk given at Cambridge, 10 December 2010.

53. See, for example, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs*, vol. 4/3, p. 297 (Kuṭb al-Dīn Abū al-Fath Nuḥammad b. Ṣamd Tayangu, perhaps of Qara Khitan origin, who was employed at the Ilkhanid court); vol. 4/2, p. 1,201 (the *emir* Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kāshgarī, of a notable Kāshgarī family, born in Bukhara, joined the Mongol army and arrived in Iran with Hülegü's troops).

54. On the Uighurs under the Qara Khitai, see Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, esp. pp. 125–27.

55. Ibid., pp. 160–68.

Nezami's Giant Brain Tackles Eskandar's *Sharafnameh*: The Authorial Voice of the Poet-Scholar-Rewriter

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This chapter opens with a programmatic authorial confession, indicative of a poet who considers his task as that of a scholar, committed to the ceaseless acquisition of knowledge:

<div dir="rtl">

که نگشادم آن شب ز دانش دری   نخفتم شبی شاد بر بستری

</div>

(SN 7, 88, 'On the Nobility of this Book', p. 930)[1]

I can't find happy sleep at night on my bed, if that night I haven't opened the door of a [new] knowledge.

The boast may sound pompous, but it is not an empty one, and internal evidence confirms that distaste for intellectual stagnation and its corollary, audacious innovation, characterise the poetical works of Nezami of Ganjeh (d. 1209?),[2] who lived at the edge of the Seljuq Empire in present-day Azerbaijan. Ganjeh was a cultural centre in a politically unsettled region. We may surmise – as evidenced in the poet's works – that these uncertain times and invasions achieved cultural de-focalisation, opening up the region to cross-pollination, and in turn impacted and matured its literary output.[3]

Considering the prevalent political mobility and multicultural ripeness conjoined with his personality as a passionate scholar–poet,[4] we may calibrate Nezami's work as representing meaningful progression within continuity; it stretches well beyond an attitude of 'uninterruptedness' in a chain of literary themes. Nezami has also been lionised as a representative of this dynamic cultural tradition, whose legacy extends to the later literary and art-historical production in the vast areas under Persian cultural influence. He resonates in the works that mushroomed in response to his *Khamseh*,[5] and also in separate verses or passages quoted in anthologies and albums, or integrated in narratives by later writers.[6]

This chapter, limited to the *Sharafnameh,* the first book of Nezami's *Eskandarnameh*, considers the poet's particular mix of continuation and innovation, shaped by his scholarly attitude and fascination for things scientific.

I also suggest here that his criticism of older pseudo-historical works and his ambition to saturate his poetry with references to his intellectual interests might have soured relations with patrons. We hear his authorial voice within several of the 11 introductory chapters to the *Sharafnameh*. It provides an echo of Nezami's relationship with his sponsors while also setting out his programme;[7] the internal evidence confirms the relevance of these authorial comments. On the other hand, his accumulated scientific erudition and his familiarity with scholarly mannerisms in data treatment come to the fore in his verses. Genuine scholarship colours his attitude to rewriting and his expressed relationship with his sources. It also permeates his poetical imagery and – a hitherto little-noticed element – strives to obtain a delicate balance of harmonisation with his sponsors' preferences. The subtlety of his response to this latter consideration has led academia astray in one particular area, as I will submit below.

In choosing the protean figure of Alexander (Eskandar) for his work, the poet consciously addresses one of the most popular literary topics in circulation, be it in Europe or in the East. As Doufikar-Aerts has it, 'in the course of the centuries after Islam a vast diffusion of the oriental Alexander tradition took place. It ramified into the languages and cultures, Christian and Muslim, of the two continents, Africa and Asia'.[8] The multiple legends woven around the figure of Eskandar hold very little resemblance to the historical figure of the Macedonian conqueror,[9] and we hear Nezami's acknowledgement of this fact: poetry and (historical) truth have little to do with each other:

نشاید در آرایش نظم خواست   و گر راست خواهی سخنهای راست
به که مایه بیتش فراهم کنم   گر آرایش نظم از او کم کنم
درین یک ورق کاغذ آرم تمام   همه کرده شاه گیتی خرام

(SN 10, 25–27, 'Summarising Eskandar's Story', p. 939)

One should not seek for the truth set in true words within the art of poetry. If I were to reduce [this work's] poetical art, I had better summarise the substance of the verses. All the actions of the world-conquering king, I can gather them on this one piece of paper.

And he proceeds to do just that, in 48 *beyts* (SN 10, 28–76). This is his way of expressing emphatically that art is prominent; his work is not a historical chronicle of the deeds of Eskandar. He alerts us that attempts to contrast the poem's contents with historical 'facts' would be irrelevant.

In Nezami's time, the prevalent 'serious' interest (as opposed to that for the Mirabilia) for the various strands of the Alexander legend continues to lie in its ethical and especially philosophical preoccupations, which are intimately related to rulership. Historical interest in the conqueror plays an ancillary role: for a millennium and a half, the Alexander-stories had been influential across the 'ancient' world as a mirror for princes, a manual of politics and acculturation.[10] Nezami is audacious in tackling this celebrated topic. But, as

we shall see, his characteristic commitment to science and innovation transforms his treatment of the traditional Alexandrian subject-matter into a substantial exercise in innovative synthesis. In several introductory passages, the author expresses his view on his task: this is no pretty recasting of an exhausted pseudo-historical collection of episodes; Nezami produces a dynamical composition, welding together existing strands of the Alexander tradition – the poet is casting his net widely and critically, also towards sources hitherto untapped by the Persian literary tradition. He also adds illustrative *hekayats*, foreign to the Alexander tradition as we know it, which function on a second level of the Nezamian synthesis, integrating philosophy into the narrative. This fundamental aspect of the work cries out to future scholarship for detailed consideration, though academia has already set to work to identify sources of specific episodes, or even single remarks.[11] This gives an intimation of Nezami's breadth of learning and literary erudition, though in fact such research could be considered counterintuitive: we are uncorking his authorial silence. One could argue that, had Nezami deemed it an indispensable enhancement to the appreciation of his poems, he would have given indications of his detailed sources. He did not, and might even rightly have considered such an exercise, emphasising the patchwork nature of his composition, as detrimental to the appreciation of his new, integrated poetical creation. His silence on his sources shows sufficiently that what he wants his audience to privilege is the global product of his discerning cherry-picking:

ز هر پوست پرداختم مغز او   گزیدم ز هر نامه ای نغزاو

از آن جمله سر جمله ای ساختم   زبان در زبان گنج پرداختم

(SN 10, 21–22, 'Summarizing Eskandar's Story', p. 939)

I have gathered the cream from each book; from each velum I have polished the kernel; language upon language, I amassed a treasure. From all of these, I selected the crème de la crème.

Nezami's composite version of the story of Eskandar is intriguing for several choices. His *Eskandarnameh*[12] consists of two separate *masnavis*, usually known as the *Sharafnameh* and the *Eqbalnameh*, probably composed with an interval between them.[13] From a passage where the poet sets out the plan for his work, it seems that he had in mind a trilogy:[14]

جداگانه بر هر دری برده رنج   سه در ساختم هر دری کان گنج

کنم دامن عالم از گنج پر   بدان هر سه دریا بدان هر سه در

(SN 8, 50–51, 'Khizr's Teachings in Storytelling', p. 933)

I have made three pearls, each pearl a separate treasure, each pearl the result of painful labour. With these three seas, with these three pearls, I fill the world's skirt with a treasure.

Old age or lack of time[15] – or rather, as I hypothesise below – the disappearance of an interested patron, might have prevented the composition of a fully developed second and third part. Instead, the brief *Eqbalnameh* seems an abbreviated compound of the two announced latter parts.

The two existing *masnavis* are united by the character of Eskandar as central hero, by the *motaqareb* metre (which is usually taken as an indication that Nezami was 'responding' to the *Shahnameh* episode on Alexander, though see below) and by the innovation of the address introducing each chapter: to the *saqi* in the *Sharafnameh* and the *moqanni* in the *Eqbalnameh*.[16] The *Sharafnameh* tells in approximately 6,500 *beyts* of Eskandar's battles, conquests and travels around the world, introducing episodes which are not part of the traditional Alexander cycle, and ending with his frustrated search for the Water of Life. The Platonic study of the world of appearance and the unreliability of pure visual perception runs as a red thread through the work. This emphasis on appearances is apposite to the tradition that credits Eskandar with the invention of the mirror and with the episodes where he impersonates others on his visits to foreign courts. The sequel, the *Eqbalnameh*, which in turn is focused on the questions surrounding Creation and life, has reached us as a much shorter, intriguing philosophical work (approximately 3,500 *beyts*). It again collates *hekayats* hitherto not associated with the Alexandrine tradition, as well as a brief anachronistic session between Eskandar and seven philosophers who express their opinion on the beginnings of Creation, in which Eskandar and Nezami also take part. Having reached the stage of prophethood, Eskandar then starts on a new tour to the four corners of the world, to establish an ideal rule and monotheism, following which he peacefully dies. The book ends with brief comments on the passing away of each of the seven philosophers and of Nezami himself.[17]

The Long Shadow of the Poeta Cliens

Nezami is thought not to have been employed as a court poet, but this does not enfranchise him from the need for sponsorship. From the evidence yielded by his work, he was, if not scrambling for stable financial patronage throughout his life, at least working to commission in the hope of gaining favour and reward. His *masnavis'* dedications to various rulers and the internal evidence of the topics he treats, geared towards princely interest, demonstrate the overriding importance of patronage for the poet. We do not know as much as we would like about the global literary output of the period, in order to judge whether suiting his Muse to the political climate makes of Nezami a typical or an exceptional ingratiating poet. Consider the following passage, brutally honest in its self-conscious courtesanship:

به یاد برزگان برآور نفس	بزرگیت باید در این دسترس
گهر نشکنی تیشه آهسته دار	سخن تا نپرسند لب بسته دار
همه گفته خویش را باد کرد	نپرسیده هر کو سخن یاد کرد

نیارم برون تا نخواهد کسی   ... مستاع گران مایه دارم بسی

(SN 7, 2–4, 13; 'About the Nobility of this Book', p. 927)

If you wish to reach greatness, sing the memory of the great ones. As long as they don't ask for words, keep your lips shut, don't shatter jewels, wield the axe softly. Anyone who, unasked, brings speech to memory, he trusts all his words to the wind ... I have enough precious goods, [but] I do not bring them out, unless someone wishes for them.

Nezami thus emerges as a 'professional poet' and it is worth remarking that this merger of politics and finances with poetics should not lead us to consider that patronage in any way compromised Nezami's poetry – though it certainly influenced it. The patrons inspired him to an unknown degree in the choice and treatment of subject-matter.[18] In the introduction to the *Sharafnameh*, he mentions his patron's full appreciation of the contents of the work, and reminds him that he is its principal impetus, thus confirming that this is not a work written at the initiative of the author.[19] Dictated by these financial considerations, it is more than likely that Nezami's work also champions his sponsor's causes. A number of open questions thus come to mind. Was the decision to delve into the Alexander tradition Nezami's educated choice, proposed to and accepted by a sponsor? Or was this the patron's choice resulting from a personal fondness for the cycle of Eskandar tales?[20] Or was his interest focused on Eskandar as an imperial paradigm? Was it his decision to excise the Mirabilia that often accompanies the Alexander tales? Was he collecting traditions and desiring a compilation of these existing versions? Was there a political concern lurking behind that choice, or was the emphasis on encouragement of literature *gratia artis*? And, in view of the change in sponsor en route as I suggest below, did the new patron's taste echo the initial plan? Whatever the lever behind the patron's preference, the following verses candidly express the influence of the financial on the poetical:

چه گنجینه ها دارد اندر نهفت   تو دانی که این گوهر نیم سفت
سزاوار تست آفرین گفتنم   نشاط از تو دارد گهر سفتنم
که بر نام ما نقش بند این نگار   ... چو فرمان چنین آمد از شهریار

(SN 9, 89–90, 92, 'The Praise of the Atabeg', p. 937)

You know which treasures this half-bored pearl hides within itself! My triumph in threading jewels comes from you; it is your duty to congratulate me! ... Such came the order from the prince: paint this portrait in my name!

Nezami's plight as a *poeta cliens* finds an echo in the sighs of many whose path, 'hackneyed by prostituted learning', like Burns, presented 'the Address with the venal soul of a servile Author'.[21] Unfortunately, we are unaware of the exact identity of the man apostrophised in Nezami's stipendiary claim. The

personality of the patrons of the two parts of the *Eskandarnameh* is enveloped
in historical fog. The dedications are not stable across manuscripts and editions,
resulting from later interpolations and tampering with the names of the
dedicatees.[22] But it is also possible to read a practical response to the vagaries
of political power in the region in these various sponsor figures scattered in the
two parts of a work that ought to have formed the unified trilogy mentioned
above. As I will hypothesise, there are other glimpses that probably confirm a
brusque change in patronage. A new sponsor would be carrying a whole new
collection of preferences and attitudes, to which the poet must respond or
against which he needs to defend himself. From a mention of the deceased
King Ahsatan (r. c. 1162–99 or later), de Blois argued that Nezami's original
patron for the *Sharafnameh* is likely to have been the young heir to the
Sharvan-Shahs' throne. Incidentally, this would show the poet's particular
popularity with the Sharvan-shahs, who also feature as dedicatees of his earlier
Leyli o Majnun. This latter *masnavi* brings additional testimony of the
overriding influence of the sponsors, as Nezami explains that *Leyli o Majnun*
was written at the insistent invitation of the patron, against the preferences and
wishes of the poet.[23] The topics chosen by this line of patrons (an Arabic
romance and now the tradition surrounding the Greek Hellenic hero) would
then also document that this family's cultural interest was stretching beyond the
narrower Persian sphere.

But, de Blois conjectures – and I follow him – that the fall of the Sharvan-
shahs occurred even before the completion of the *Sharafnameh*. Nezami then
shifted his dedication to the new strong figure of the region, Nosrat-al-Din
Beshkin,[24] who, from some aggrieved authorial remarks analysed below, seems
unfortunately not to have been an equally sensitive literary patron with a fine
aesthetic sense worthy of the poet's demanding art. The chase for a sponsor
continued for the shortened *Eqbalnameh*, and, if we may trust it,[25] the
dedication at its end seems an uncertain venture. In this dampening echo of the
ringing words at the beginning of the work, the poet, now wrapping up the
masnavi, admits he is still looking for a knowledgeable and generous
Maecenas:

کزو نشکند نام گوهر فروش   نیوشنده ای باز جویم به هوش
گهر بی خریدار ناید درست   ...سخن را نیوشنده باید نخست
همان گوهر افشاندن بی قیاس   مرا مشتری هست گوهرشناس

(EN42, 7, 11–12, 'Conclusion of the *Eqbalnameh*', p. 1,452)

I am looking for an intelligent audience, who will not shatter the
fame of the jeweller … For speech there first ought to be an
audience, a jewel without a buyer is an aberration. According to me,
a buyer is a jewel-connoisseur who meanwhile scatters jewels
without count.

We shall briefly refer again to patronage as a possible explanation for the puzzling references Nezami makes to the *Shahnameh*.

Nil Sine Magno Labore

Having circumscribed the topic and secured the agreement of a sponsor, the poet embarked on a comprehensive and scholarly effort to gather data:

ندیدم نگاریده در یک نورد	اثرهای آن شاه آفاق گرد
به هر نسختی در پراکنده بود	سخنها که چون گنج آگنده بود
برو بستم از نظم پیرایه ها	ز هر نسخه برداشتم مایه ها
یهودی و نصرانی و پهلوی	زیادت ز تاریخهای نوی

(SN 10, 17–20, 'Summarising Eskandar's Story', p. 939)

The deeds of this world-encircling king, I didn't find them gathered in one work. The words, which were like a plump treasure, were scattered in all possible manuscripts. I extracted the substance from each of the writings and wrapped it in a shirt of verses; a lot [was gathered] from new historical works, whether Hebrew, Christian (Nazarean) or Pahlavi.

The value of this famous passage is in need of reassessment: its significance for our understanding of Nezami's venture is of paramount importance. As a tantalising authorial clue about references, it immediately defeats itself by its vagueness. Rather, what the poet does is point a finger at his international sources, straddling various religious and cultural boundaries.[26] His purpose in advertising his innovative synthesis is probably to draw attention to a new cultural xenophilia on the part of the sponsor's regime, the latter probably also mirroring political contacts with neighbouring cultures. The vision of both the author and of the original patron seems to have been that cultural integration would boost the poem's value but also the ruler's image as a cross-pollinating influence in the region.[27] It might thus be possible to view Nezami's reinterpretation of the Alexander legend as the product of a scholarly purpose mirroring a political venture. On the literary level of source-gathering, the *Eskandarnameh* is an exercise in appropriation and conquest, with no anxiety about respecting the source text(s). It is a typical product of a Nietzschean 'ascending culture',[28] and this tells us something about, not necessarily the political power of the provincial courts for which Nezami wrote, but rather the cultural ebullience of the period in the region. By heralding the compilation of foreign traditions which, provokingly, he does not identify except by their languages resonating with religious affiliations, Nezami does not necessarily wish to baffle academic posterity. His purpose is to advertise his *Eskandarnameh* as an innovative, comprehensive synthesis, integrating data selected in as many Alexander cycles as were available, and insisting upon 'new' sources written in all kinds of languages.[29] We may surmise that, by

'Christian', he meant either Byzantine or, more likely, Syriac texts – probably the Christian Syriac Alexander Legend and/or the *Syriac Alexander Romance*.[30] He also echoes the critical image of Eskandar in the Pahlavi tradition and he refers to the Jewish tradition, with its varied assessment of Alexander's character.[31] However, though unmentioned, the heart of his narrative is the *Pseudo-Callisthenes Romance*, ubiquitous in the Oriental Eskandar tradition: Doufikar-Aerts has analysed the Arabo-Persian tradition as shaped by the *Βίος Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Μακεδόνος* composed by this unknown (Egyptian?) author in the third century CE. It forms the framework of the Arabic Alexander tradition, augmented by motifs from the Dhu 'l-Qarneyn tradition (such as the search for the Water of Life and building the Wall against Gog and Magog), and a selection of material from Wisdom Literature (such as Alexander's involvement with philosophy).[32] Beyond these, Doufikar-Aerts also mentions the epistolary tradition, the Alexander Strategos and the Sirat.[33]

But Nezami's giant brain sees beyond this narrative synthesis. The choice of character and subject-matter is the excuse to express his involvement with philosophy. The conjunction of all these disparate traditions shapes a character embodying the three aspects of the ideal ruler advanced by Farabi (d. 950): king-conqueror, philosopher and prophet:

<div dir="rtl">

مبین سرسری سوی آن شهریار   که هم تیغ زن بود و هم تاجدار

گروهیش خوانند صاحب سریر   ولایت ستان بلکه آفاق گیر

گروهی ز دیوان دستور او   به حکمت نبشتند منشور او

گروهی ز پاکی و دین پروری   پذیرا شدندش به پیغمبری

من از هر سه دانه که دانا فشاند   درختی برومند خواهم نشاند

</div>

(SN 8, 42–46, 'Khizr's Teachings in Storytelling', p. 933)

Don't glance inattentively at this king, who was both handling the sword and wearing the crown. Some call him the lord of the throne, grasper of kingdoms, even of the universe; others, from the versified histories about him, write about the wisdom of his royal mandate; others, because of his purity and religiosity, welcome him into prophethood. From these three seeds which the wise one has scattered, I will produce a mighty tree.

With this similarity between Nezami's tripartite Eskandar character and Farabi's ideal philosopher-king, which has convincingly been demonstrated by Bürgel,[34] we touch upon the fundamental theme of Nezami's *Eskandarnameh* as a Mirror for Princes. All the elements for this view are present in the Alexander tradition: history knows him as a conqueror involved with philosophers and the Qur'an identifies him as a prophet. Several aspects of Farabi's political philosophy seem related to, and are 'ultimately unthinkable without Alexander the Great and his conquests and designs'.[35]

But I would like to suggest a nuance about the combined Farabian philosopher–prophet facet of the ideal ruler's character. This stage in the development of Nezami's Eskandar as a prototype of Muhammad is not self-evident.[36] Farabi's Perfect City has too quickly been assumed to be analogous to the religious and political community shaped by Islam. In his study of the philosopher, Vallat has a striking formula: 'Farabi n'est guère plus musulman que Proclus n'est chrétien.'[37] The stage of prophethood which Farabi's monarch ultimately needs to reach is not, as has been conjectured, that of a prophet of Islam *avant la lettre*. Rather, as Vallat explains, the ideal ruler needs to be a metaphysicist in the Platonic sense – that is, having reached the ultimate philosophical level, which he names the 'religious' stage. There is no 'virtuous' religion but that founded by the philosopher:

> the ultimate goal of the royal or political art is indeed to conform human life to the hierarchical order which rules within the universe and first within the structure of the principles which rule over the latter. This hierarchical structure, to which one must add the definition of human felicity and of royal Authority forms, so to speak, the metaphysical basis of the royal art. It is this ensemble of knowledges which Farabi calls 'the fundaments of the opinions of the inhabitants of the Virtuous City.'[38]

This is not the place to go deeper into the far-reaching implications of Nezami's adoption of this Farabian royal theory, which deserves detailed analysis. For the purpose of the present demonstration, the above brings one more proof to the case I am making for Nezami's familiarity and involvement with science, and in this particular case philosophy and metaphysics.

An Academic Red Herring

Continuing the examination of the *Sharafnameh* sources, what follows is a consideration of Nezami's puzzling and mostly conjectural, relation to the *Shahnameh*. I will submit that the remarks to this effect made by the authorial voice are in need of careful reassessment, as are passages within the narrative. A general misunderstanding about Nezami's references to Ferdowsi has caused academic frustration, borne of the fact that the internal evidence of the *masnavi* produces no confirmation that Nezami took the *Shahnameh* as a model.

I suggest here that there are no grounds for this baffling *Shahnameh* conundrum, which has haunted our consideration for Nezami as a 'rewriter'.[39] I will also hypothesise that the references within the narrative might spotlight Nezami's attempt to cater to opposing forces: the (new?) patron's fondness for the *Shahnameh* vs. the poet's sober assessment of this latter ancient work.

In the following extract, Nezami makes an exception to his usual silence about his sources, and we prick up our ears immediately! Here is an elaborate allusion to one particular source and author, which are likely to be Ferdowsi

and his *Shahnameh*. The passage mentions the older poet in a transparent circumlocution stressed by enjambment:

که آراست روی سخن چون عروس	سخنگوی پیشینه دانای طوس
بسی گفتنیهای ناگفته ماند	در آن نامه کان گوهر سفته راند
بگفتی دراز آمدی داستان	اگر هر چه بشنیدی از باستان
همان گفت کز وی گزیرش نبود	نگفت آنچه رغبت پذیرش نبود
قلم دیده ها را قلم درکشید	... نظامی که در رشته گوهر کشید
ترازوی خود را گهر سنج یافت	بناسفته دری که در گنج یافت
حدیث کهن را بدو تازه کرد	شرفنامه را فرخ آوازه کرد

(SN 7, 118–21, 123–25, 'About the Nobility of this Book', p. 931)

> *The knowledgeable (or wise) old(-fashioned) speaker from Tus, who could decorate speech's face like that of a bride, has left a lot of unspoken words in that book in which he has pierced pearls. If one were to say everything one has heard from the historical past, the story would be too long! He did not say what he did not enjoy, but he said the things he could not avoid ... Nezami, who is stringing together gathered jewels, discarded from his pen what the pen has already seen. He loaded his scale with gems, with the unpierced pearls gathered in his treasury. He made the Sharafnameh into a glorious song; the old story was renewed through him.*

Note how Nezami is apologising for 'the older author from Tus': he was not exhaustive, but has selected episodes according to his subjective preferences and only told the bare minimum of the tale. Nezami will 'renew the old story' and avoid repeating what has been written already. Rather than advertising Nezami's main source and expressing his penchant for rewriting the *Shahnameh* episodes, as this passage has mostly been understood, I submit that it contains an explicit rejection of the *Shahnameh*'s paternity over Nezami's *Sharafnameh*. The poet uses the eloquent pearl-piercing metaphor twice within these few lines to confirm the fundamental dissimilarity, first between his own art and Ferdowsi's superficial poetic style (he decorates the face of speech, while Nezami pierces the pearl), and then between both stories.

Why mention a work one does not intend to use as a source? I would argue that what this and similar references to Ferdowsi do show in a positive light is only the *Shahnameh*'s popularity and possible impact on Nezami's sponsors. The *Eskandarnameh*'s genesis is forever hidden from us, but it is tempting to hypothesise that here might be a *captatio benevolentiae* of an (new) audience, surprised that the work in front of them is so different from the well-known *Shahnameh* episode.

By the end of the *Sharafnameh*, Nezami has escalated from mildness to sweeping impatience, passing judgement in very strong terms:

بر او زیور راستی بافتم   به جائی که ناراستی یافتم
بود خوار اگر پایه بر مه برد   سخن کان نه بر راستی ره برد
غلط رانده بود از درستی سخن   کجا پیش پیرای پیر کهن
بدین عذر وا گویم آن گفته باز   غلط گفته را تازه کردم طراز

(SN 62, 48–51, 'Eskandar Returns to Rum', p. 1,171)

*Wherever I found untruth, I decked it out in truth's gems; words which
do not lead to truth are abject, even though they have their feet placed
on the moon! Wherever the surface decoration of the old-fashioned
old man made a mistake about speech's truth, I have woven for it new
brocade. It is for this reason that I had to repeat things that had
already been said.*

Is it too far-fetched to read frustration in the author's admission of having been
forced – against his expressed preferences – to recast some episodes for the
sake of truthfulness? He is at odds with the prevailing admiration for what he
terms the 'old-fashioned elderly man, the surface-decorator'.[40] This vehemence
possibly also indicates that Nezami had to fight for his innovative version to be
accepted.

He is adamant that he did not base his work on Ferdowsi's chronicle, which,
from a comparative analysis of the story-lines and characters, we should even
hesitate to identify as a source.[41] In the case of *Khosrow o Shirin*, as in the case
of Eskandar, one could describe the choice of the characters as secondary to
Nezami's aim. It is not because the former happen to be mentioned in the
Shahnameh that he has chosen them, but because these costume-drama
characters had presumably become a byword for the destruction wrought by
irresponsible love in a king's life and career. This is what is so exactly relevant
to the philosophical topic of his poem: the *'eshq-bazi*, the love interest within
the story of the two lovers, left out by the 'older author'.[42] Labelling Nezami's
Khosrow o Shirin simply a rewriting of the *Shahnameh*'s episode is unfair to
this complex philosophical examination of different genres of love, their
psychological and physical effects on human lives, and their political incidence
as they influence the royal persona. I also read provocative humour in Nezami's
choice of Shirin as his heroine. He uses the psychological shock of
defamiliarisation *avant la lettre*, by placing the ill-reputed courtesan of the
historical chronicle in the seat of a Jungian Anima who will conduct the
intrinsically lustful and misguided Khosrow to a higher level of love, and thus
of living and ruling. The misunderstanding around the issue of the rewriting of
stories that are presumed similar because they use the same characters has even
backfired on the *Shahnameh* episode: procrustean reading credits Ferdowsi's
tarred historical Shirin with the purity of Nezami's heroine.[43]

Returning to the *Sharafnameh*, further considerations pile up evidence
against a *Shahnameh* paternity. In a passage at the beginning of the narrative,
Nezami critically assesses sources on Eskandar's heredity, among which he

rejects the data found in the work of 'the troublesome *Dehqan*'. Internal evidence within the *Shahnameh* allows us to presume that this refers to Ferdowsi:[44]

<div dir="rtl">

به دارا کند نسل او باز بست   دگرگونه دهقان آزر پرست

هم از نامه مرد ایزد شناس   ز تاریخها چون گرفتم قیاس

گزافه سخن را درستی نبود   در آن هر دو گفتر چستی نبود

که از فیلقوس آمد آن شهریار   درست آن شد که گفته هر دیار

</div>

(SN 12, 33–37, 'Beginning of the Book and Origin of Eskandar', p. 945)

The troublesome Dehqan [has spoken in] a different way: he tied [Eskandar's] origin to Dara. When I compared the histories, and also the book of the god-knowing man, [I realised that] there was no truth in either of these sayings. There was no truth in these foolish words! The truth is this, from the chronicles of all lands: that king descended from Filqus.

Twelfth-century Nezami, settled in the outskirts of the Persian cultural area, under the rule of Turkish dynasties, had no reason to place paramount importance on the royal bloodline of the Iranian kings, and he gives short shrift to Ferdowsi's jingoism and doctored Persian heredity for Eskandar (which might be an inheritance from the Persian oral tradition). The other reference Nezami rejects, the 'god-knowing man', might refer to a Syriac Christian author, who follows the Pseudo-Callisthenes Egyptian genealogy for Alexander or to a Byzantine author.[45] Nezami stresses the Greek-Macedonian heredity of his hero, thus showing a scholarly attitude in his critical, comparative assessment of data.[46] He also introduces the Greco-Hellenistic (Macedonian) key that underpins the whole work as a *basso continuo*, and he remains true to his intellectual honesty, which brings him to innovate on this point within the prevalent Persian Alexander tradition.

Although in the above example, and based on the internal evidence of the *Shahnameh*, the identification of the *dehqan* as Ferdowsi seems possible, it is unlikely in other passages. In several occurrences, Nezami resumes the narrative thread of the *Sharafnameh* chapters with a formula introducing, *isnad*-wise, a vague reference to a source.[47] Each of these is subtly different, and the first occurrence of the phenomenon is thus:

<div dir="rtl">

چنین داد نظم سخن را نوی   گزارنده نامه خسروی

</div>

(SN 12, 3, 'Beginning of the Story and Eskandar's Heredity', p. 943)

The speaker of the kingly book, innovated poetical speech in this manner.

The mention of a 'kingly book' rings a tempting literary bell, but a reading of this as a reference to Ferdowsi[48] is frustrated by the context: it immediately

follows on the passage where Nezami eliminates the *Shahnameh* heredity. The contents of the other narrative passages introduced as 'the royal chronicles', or 'the chronicle of the *dehqan*', are either not present within the *Shahnameh* or are so different as to bear no similarity with Ferdowsi's story.[49]

It seems probable – in the absence of verification – that his references to royal chronicles written by a *dehqan* refer to the Pahlavi sources he announced in his introduction. Apart from his poetical squeamishness to repeat what has already been said, the main reason for his rejection of Ferdowsi is the latter's falling short of Nezami's all-important *'iyari* criterion:

<div dir="rtl">

سخنگو بر آن اختیاری نداشت   دگر گفتها چون عیاری نداشت

</div>

(SN 12, 37, 'Beginning of the Story and Eskandar's Heredity', p. 945)

> *As the other stories do not stand the test [of truth], the speaker has not given them any credential.*

This overriding concern with truth, with what is acceptable to intelligence, returns as a leitmotiv in the authorial passages, thus explaining the absence of Mirabilia, while also hammering home the philosophical necessity for truth.

Exegesis Clouded by Intertextuality: Rewriting the Contest of the Painters

Let us now consider Nezami in action through the following case study where he translates a philosophical issue into poetry. The Contest of the Painters is not part of the Alexander tradition.[50] Nezami is not its inventor, though it is his innovative decision to insert the episode within the structure of the *Sharafnameh*, and this fact highlights the *hekayat*'s value at this precise place within the narrative. We do not know its origin, but within the timespan of roughly 50 years beyond either end of Nezami's lifetime, two other Persian authors, the theologian Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and the mystic Mowlana Rumi (d. 1273),[51] neither involved with the Alexander cycle, used this particular story, each in order to illustrate their own theories. Here is the episode as it appears in its most popular form, in Rumi's *Masnavi*. A king decides to organise a contest between two groups of artists. He installs them in a big room which is separated by a curtain and orders each group to decorate the opposite walls of the room. The painters from Chin are obnoxious and demand many expensive pigments, generously provided at great cost by the king. When everyone is ready, the curtain that separates the room is lifted and the king stands in the middle, astonished. The decorations of both facing walls are identical. It eventually transpires that, while the talented artists of Chin were painting a lovely scene on their wall, the Rumis did the opposite: they got rid of design and colour and polished their wall until it was purified and reflected the opposite picture like a mirror, making it appear more brilliant. They exemplify a Sufi attitude, which Rumi wants his audience to attempt.

Rumi presumably adapted this episode from the version proposed by al-Ghazali, who used it to examine the various qualities of knowledge and the contrast between acquired knowledge created by abstracting truths from sensibles (as do the *hokama'* and *'olama'*), and received illumination of divine origin (as that of the *owliya'* – 'the friends of God'). The soul's perception of the sensory experience is superior to the sensory experience itself.[52] Rumi makes a lightweight use of the story to illustrate a facet of progression on the Sufi path: rather than seeking knowledge in books, one ought to purify one's soul of all exterior knowledge, which covers it as does rust, as a cloud covers the sun and the moon. Purify, reject outside knowledge, and your pure soul will be able to receive and reflect divine light.

The presence of this story within the fibre of the *Sharafnameh*, with its red thread examining Eskandar's relation to the world of appearance and mirrors, is apposite. Nezami's art as a storyteller is also obvious in the care with which he has placed the story within the narrative's structure: at a moment when Eskandar happens to be interacting with Chinis, who traditionally enjoy the reputation of being excellent painters. The poet does not mention his source. The episode's significance departs from its treatment by either Ghazali or Rumi and suggests that the poet was able to conceptualise different uses for the story's remit, or that he tapped a different source.[53]

The *majles* discussion during which the contest is decided, ranges painting among arts such as *neyrang* (magic, sorcery), *afsungari* (magic, incantation) and *jadu'i-ha* (necromancy, witchcraft). Within the work's global theme of the temporal ruler's philosophical education, this particular story plays on the suspicion with which the mind ought to receive visual impressions.

The *Sharafnameh* is showing us this early philosophical education of Eskandar. Philosophy is of overriding importance within a ruler's education, as voiced in Plato's gloomy caveat: 'There will be no end to the suffering for our cities and for the human race, as long as our present kings and rulers will not become true, real philosophers, as long as political power and philosophy are not united and as long as all those whose inclination is to pursue the former without the latter will not be forcefully restrained.'[54]

Plato's formative thoughts on rulership have pollinated Islamic countries and Nezami's awareness of Platonism might well have come through Farabi.[55] The poet uses this *hekayat* as an illustration of the seminal problem of perception as treated in the *Theaetetes*.[56] The absence of an absolute winner of the contest in his version is the most immediately striking detail:

<div dir="rtl">

مصقّل همی کرد چینی سرای   به صورتگری بود رومی به پای

به افروزش این سو پذیرنده شد   هر آن نقش کان صفه گیرنده شد

که هست از بصر هر دو را یاوری   بر آن رفت فتوی در آن داوری

گه صقل چینی بود چیره دست   نداند چو رومی کسی نقش بست

</div>

(SN 44, 42–45, 'The Contest of the Rumi and Chini Painters', p. 1,106)

The Rumi was up and about painting, [meanwhile] the Chini was polishing his domain. Any painting that that room was receiving, this side was reflecting it through polishing. In this [contest] came the fatwa, that, according to [the sense of] vision, each one deserves victory: no-one can draw like the Rumi; in the realm of polishing, the Chini has the upper hand.

The contest peters out, with no winner: the art of painting and the skill in polishing are placed on par with one another. The point is not about rating the artists, but about denouncing the value of visual discovery: it is the onlooker who is important, not the artists. The crux of Nezami's story occurs when the baffled king sits in the middle of the room and gazes now to one wall, now to the other, unable to see any difference. For him, because the painting and its reflection look the same, they are equal, echoing Protagoras's statement, reported by Plato, that 'knowledge is perception':

درین و در آن کرد نیکو نگاه	میان دو پرگار بنشست شاه
نه پی برد بر پرده رازشان	نه بشناخت از یکدیگر بازشان
نشد صورت حال بر وی درست	بسی راز از آن در نظر باز جست
که این می پذیرفت و آن می نمود	بلی در میانه یکی فرق بود
بدیع آمد آن نقش فرزانه را	چو فرزانه دید آن دو بتخانه را
کزان نقش سر رشته ای باز یافت	درستی طلب کرد و چندان شتافت

(SN 44, 29–34, 'The Contest of the Rumi and Chini Painters', p. 1,106)

The king sat in between the two drawings; he threw a keen look at the one and the other. Unable to distinguish them from each other, he was unable to pass beyond the veil of their secret. A long time he sought their secret with his gaze, but the state of the case remained out of focus for him. Yes, there was one difference between them: this [wall] received and that one showed. When the sage saw these two idol temples (murals), these drawings astonished him. He searched for the truth and busied himself so much that he found the tip of the thread [to unravel] these drawings.

The Farzaneh, the sage, is aware of the difference between the perceptual and the reflective uses of the mind. He goes to a lot of trouble (we hear an echo of Plato's mental investigation)[57], exercising logical deduction; he orders for the curtain to be put back in place, and notices that the wall of the Chinis is now blank. When once more the curtain is removed, the mural reappears. The wise man now understands, because he has used his intellect to interpret what his eyes showed him. Knowledge is acquired by reflection, not by trusting sensual perception.[58]

I have untangled elsewhere how the net of parallelisms between this *hekayat* and the context in which it appears helps decode the philosophical purpose behind Nezami's story. The context is that of Eskandar's dealings with

the Khaqan of Chin, and focuses on the awareness of deceptive appearances encouraged by reliance on the senses – in this instance, on sight.[59] This particular problem occurs several times for Nezami's Eskandar, thus stressing that, on his learning curve to becoming an ideal monarch–philosopher, it is essential that Eskandar be aware that 'in αἴσθησις [perception] one does not grasp οὐσία [existence] and truth … it is only in reflective judgment that the power to judge about the οὐσία of anything is evinced'.[60]

Thus, like Ghazali before him, Nezami uses the story as a prop to reflect on the knowledge created by the perception of sensibles. But while the older philosopher contrasts this knowledge with the pure, divine knowledge that does not need perception, the poet shifts the focus onto the perceiver's inability to understand perception's significance without mental effort.

'Why Are You Laughing?' Asked the King

I have taken Nezami's authorial intentions seriously, as they shed invaluable light on his ambitions not only as author, rewriter and *poeta doctus*, but also as *poeta cliens*. This has developed our understanding of his learned approach to his chosen Eskandar topic, his philosophical agenda, and the intellectual fundaments of his synthesis of the various traditions that were available to him. In so doing, I have redressed our view of his relation to his most famous predecessor, and hypothesised the struggle to satisfy several patrons-sponsors with their foundational impact on the burgeoning poem; an impact which might have been positive, or otherwise. I have then examined a particular episode illustrating the poet's philosophical purpose.

Another dimension of the *poeta doctus* has hitherto been left aside, which I would like to mention by way of a conclusion: the presence of scholarship and science woven within the poetical imagery of his work. The importance of the linguistic level is arguably greater than any other approach to a particular poet or poem:

بدین دلفریبی سخنهای بکر   بسختی توان زادن از راه فکر

سخن گفتن بکر جان سفتن است   نه هرکس سزای سخن گفتن است

(SN 7, 92–93, 'About the Nobility of this Book', p. 930)

Virgin words of such delight can only be born through intellectual labouring. To speak in virgin words is to drill a hole through the soul; not everyone is capable of creating speech [in such a manner].

Across centuries and cultural spheres, this understanding of poetry's essence is rephrased by J. Cohen as follows: 'a poet is a poet, not because of what he has thought or felt, but because he has said it. He is a creator, not of ideas, but of words. His genius rests entirely on verbal invention.'[61]

It is a testimony to Nezami's overriding interest in scholarly pursuits that he uses references and imagery relating to science as a linguistic and poetic tool.[62]

Unobtrusive and unostentatious, they may remain undetected within the narrative. One particular favourite of mine is the moment when Eskandar and his tired army cross from India to China, and reach the roof of Tibet:

<div dir="rtl">

چو بر اوج تبت رسید افسرش   به خنده در آمد همه لشکرش

بپرسید کاین خنده از بهر چیست   به جائی که بر خود بباید گریست

نمودند کین ز عفران گونه خاک   کند مرد را بی سبب خنده ناک

</div>

(SN 42,18–20, 'Eskandar Travels from Hindustan to Chin', pp. 1,086–7)

When his crown reached the zenith of Tibet, his whole army started to laugh. He asked: 'What is the reason for this laughing fit, in a place where one ought to cry over oneself?' They answered that [it was] the saffron-coloured dust [that] made the men laugh without reason.

This anecdote is irrelevant in the narrative, and can thus only be explained by the poet's amusement at inserting puzzling details that require some botanical and pharmacological knowledge to unravel. Saffron (*Crocus Sativus*), a small bulb, grows wild in Iran and the Himalayas. Also used in cuisine, its dried stigmas however produce a coloured and pungent ingredient which happens to be a powerfully exhilarating substance. We learn this from a famous pharmacological treatise written by Nezami's contemporary, the Andalusian scholar Ibn al-Baytar (d. 1248): 'saffron, put into wine, causes strong intoxication and, because it is so exhilarating, it can cheer one up to the pitch of madness'.[63]

Another example gives a further glimpse of Nezami's sophisticated play with pharmacology.[64] As Eskandar and a Chinese slave-girl seduce one another, a hot interlude occurs during which, inevitably:

<div dir="rtl">

بهم درخزیده دو سرو بلند   به بادام و روغن در افتاده قند

</div>

(SN 58, 166, 'Eskandar Sports with the Chinese Slave-girl', p. 1,157)

The two tall cypresses crept together, the candy-sugar fell into the almond and oil!

Badam (almond) and *qand* (sugar) are generally known as metaphors respectively for the eye and the lips, or the words;[65] but such a reading robs the passage of sense: How could lips fall into eyes and oil? The context points in the direction of a description of love-making, as the whole passage (SN 58, 153–68) first describes the amorous game, followed by several *beyts* with explicit sexual meaning. Our imagination may fantasise about the best way to translate this evocative image. But it seems evident that Nezami's innovative metaphor derives from his awareness of the precise pharmacological effect of the combination of the substances, which suddenly clarifies the loaded imagery. Indeed, the simultaneous sampling of almonds and sugar 'augments the production of sperm'.[66] This cheeky metaphor must have been a particular

favourite of his, as it appears on two other occasions, describing similar circumstances: in the *Makhzan al-Asrar* (MA 18, 12) and in the *Khosrow o Shirin* (KS 89, 102).

In the course of my analysis of Nezami's involvement with science, I was unable to conclude to a difference in the level of the scholarly references between the different *masnavis*.[67] This indicates that Nezami deemed it unnecessary to vary his learned style as he moved between patrons. The latters' decisive influence appears to have been limited to the *masnavis*' topics, as seen above. I am thus suggesting that the particular manner in which learned allusions mingle with the poetic imagery was Nezami's own literary technique. Incidentally, it might be that the poet also wished to foster interest in sciences by teasing his audience with scientific references, or, alternatively, that he was addressing a sophisticated public who would have enjoyed placing the references in their scientific context.

Exemplifying Lefevere's 'spirited rewriter',[68] pillaging the storehouse of stories, adapting and deforming these to his purpose, peppering his verses with scientific references – and above all, using his narratives in order to illustrate a philosophical message – Nezami has the final word, throwing the following challenge at us:

بدین کاسدی در نشاید فروخت	خریدار در چون صدف دیده دوخت
همی حاجت آید به گوهر پسند	مرا با چنین گوهری ارجمند

(SN 7, 14–15, 'About the Nobility of This Book', p. 967)

A buyer of pearls as blind as an oyster: one should not sell anything to such a despicable individual. I, possessor of such a precious jewel, I need someone who can appreciate it!

Notes:

1. All references to Nezāmi's text are taken from *Kolliyāt-e Nezāmi Ganjavi, Sharafnāmeh*, ed. Vahid Dastgerdi (Tehran: Negah, 1372SH/1973-74), vol. II, pp. 912–1311. All translations, devoid of any ambition other than to propose sufficiently comprehensible functionalisms, are my own.

2. This essay does not address biographical issues. In fact, very little exact information is known about the life of the twelfth-century poet Nezāmi of Ganjeh and we need to handle this information with critical caution. Also, its significance for literary analysis is debatable as the biographical should be integrated sparsely and only when relevant into the work of interpretation. For the basic facts on Nezāmi's biography, see François de Blois, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey, Volume V: Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period* (London/New York: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2004), pp. 363–73; and Nezāmi Ganjavi, *Divān-e qasā'ed*, ed. Sa'id Nafisi (Tehran: FoRughi, n.d.), pp. 1–217. See also Julie S. Meisami, transl., *Nizami: Haft Paykar. A Medieval Persian Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. vii–xlvi; J. Christoph Bürgel, transl., *Nizami: Das Alexanderbuch. Iskandarnama* (Zurich: Manesse, 1991), pp. 585–630. For his bibliography, see Kamran Talattof, 'International Recognition of Nizami's Work: A Bibliography', in Kamran Talattof and J. W. Clinton, eds, *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love and Rhetoric* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 189–204.

3. See a detailed picture of Nezāmi's Ganjeh in Renate Würsch, *Nizamis Schatzkammer der Geheimnisse, Eine Untersuchung zu Mahzan ul-asrār* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005), pp. 6–8. Other poets, such as Qatran, Falaki, Khāqāni, and Mahsati, also flourished in Ganjeh.

4. I have attempted an analysis of the poet's scholarly proficiency in Christine van Ruymbeke, *Science and Poetry in Medieval Persia. The Botany of Nizami's Khamsa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and in further related essays.

5. Asghar A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizāmī's Epic Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 68–69 – citing H. Dhulfaqārī, *Manzūmahā-yi 'āshiqāna-yi adab-i Fārsi* (Tehran: Nīmā, 1374SH/1995), pp. 66–68 – mentions 59 *nazīra*s (imitations) of Nezāmi's *Leyli o Majnun masnavi*.

6. He features with Ferdowsi and Sa'di as one of the most popular poets cited in Persian prosimetric texts. The *darj-e ash'ār* (poetry-insertion) of verses of Ferdowsi and Nezāmi in several *dāstāns* ('popular romances') is explored in Julia Rubanovich, 'Aspects of Medieval Intertextuality: Verse Insertions in Persian Prose *Dāstān*s', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 32 (2006), pp. 247–68. See also Julie S. Meisami, 'The Historian and the Poet: Rāvandī, Nizāmī and the Rhetoric of History', in Talattof and Clinton, *Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi*, pp. 97–128. For a mention of the resonance of Nezāmi's poems within the neighbouring Georgian literature, see, for example, Fatemeh Soudavar Farmanfarmaian, 'Georgia and Iran: Three Millennia of Cultural Relations. An Overview', *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2: 1 (2009), pp. 24–27.

7. In preparing this article, I realised that J. Christoph Bürgel mentions several of the points I discuss here in his 'On Some Sources of Nezami's Iskandarnama', in Franklin Lewis and Sunil Sharma, eds, *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on his 80th Birthday* (Amsterdam/West Lafayette: Iranian Studies Series, 2007), pp. 21–30. I am confident, however, that my work does not duplicate that of my esteemed colleague and Nezami specialist.

8. Faustina Doufikar-Aerts, 'King Midas' Ears on Alexander's Head: In Search of the Afro-Asiatic Alexander Cycle', in Richard Stoneman, Kyle Erickson, Ian Richard Netton, eds, *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East* (Groningen: Barkhuis/Groningen University Library, 2012), p. 63.

9. The literature about Alexander is truly enormous. In addition to the works cited specifically in this article, I will also mention A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire. The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and his other works related to Alexander; Parivash Jamzadeh, *Alexander Histories and Iranian Reflections. Remnants of Propaganda and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Margaret Bridges and J. Christoph Bürgel, eds, *The Problematics of Power: Easter and Western Representations of Alexander the Great* (Berne: Peter Lang AGM, 1996).

10. Nezāmi's oeuvre is concerned with education and with advice, and this is recognised in the title of *hakim* given to the author. On the link between *andarz* literature and this title, see Johan T. P. de Bruijn, 'Classical Persian Literature as a Tradition', in Johan T. P. de Bruijn, ed., *General Introduction to Persian Literature* (London/New York: I.B.Tauris, 2009), p. 28.

11. J. Christoph Bürgel has done sizeable research into Nezāmi's sources. See, for example, his 'On Some Sources of Nizāmī's Iskandarnāma', and *Das Alexanderbuch*, pp. 590–3. See also, for example, Mario Casari, 'Nizami's Cosmographic Vision and Alexander in Search of the Fountain of Life', in J. Christoph Bürgel and Christine van Ruymbeke, eds, *A Key to the Treasure of the Hakim: Artistic and Humanistic aspects of Nizami Ganjavi's Khamsa* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011), pp. 95–106.

12. I have used the edition by Vahid Dastgerdi, cited in note 1, above. For the manuscripts of the *Eskandarnāma*, see Charles Ambrose Storey and François de Blois, *Persian Literature. A Bio-bibliographical Survey*, vol. 5 (Abingdon: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2004) pp. 371–409. The translation in English prose by Henry Wilberforce Clarke, *The Sikandar Nāma,e Bara: or, Book of Alexander the Great, written AD 1200, by Abu Muhammad bin Yusuf bin Mu,ayyid-i- Nizamu-'d-Din, translated for the first time out of the Persian into prose [...], by Captain H. Wilberforce Clarke* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1881) should be used with caution; but see the German prose translation, Bürgel, *Das Alexanderbuch*.

13. There is uncertainty as to the chronology of Nezāmi's works in general, and in particular as to the dates of his *masnavis*. With the exception of the fixed date of 1181 for the *Leyli o Majnun masnavi*, all other *masnavis* are undated. Storey and de Blois, *Persian Literature*, pp. 486–87, at the end of earnest research into the matter, proposes a span of six years, between 1188 and 1194, for the completion of the two parts of the *Eskandarnāmeh*.

14. See also Peter J. Chelkowski, 'Nizāmi's Iskandarnāmeh', in Fondazione Leone Caetani eds, *Colloquio sul Poeta Persiano Nizāmī e la Leggenda Iranica di Alessandro Magno* (Roma: Academia Nazionale di Lincei, 1977), pp. 14–15. Note that François de Blois, 'Eskandar-Nāma of Nezāmī', in *EIr* 8/6, pp. 612–14, 1998, reads this mention as referring to Nezāmi's three previous *masnavis*. But, judging from their context, the verses most likely relate to the poet's plan for three books each treating one of the three aspects of Eskandar's tradition.

15. As suggested (with an oral confirmation by J. C. Bürgel) by Gabrielle van den Berg, 'Descriptions and Images: Remarks on Gog and Magog in Nizāmī's Iskandar Nāma,

Firdawsī's Shāh Nāma and Amīr Khusraw's A'īna-yi Iskandarī', in Bürgel, *A Key to the Treasure of the Hakīm,* pp. 83–84.

16. See Christine van Ruymbeke, 'Iskandar's Bibulous Business: Wine, Drunkenness and the Calls to the Sāqi in Nizāmi Ganjavi's Sharaf Nāma', *Iranian Studies* 46: 2 (March 2013), pp. 251–72, in which I have shown how these addresses and the emphasis on Eskandar's wine-drinking are likely to derive from Nezāmi's awareness of the legendary relation between Alexander and Dionysius. See A. D. Knock, 'Notes on Ruler-cult: I. Alexander and Dionysus', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 47 (1928), pp. 21–30. Descent from Heracles and Dionysus is ascribed to Alexander in Pseudo-Callisthenes, I 46a (consulted online: http://www.attalus.org/info/ Alexander .html): 'Our gods are famous. Rooted deep in the past is our common origin. Dionysus, son of Zeus and Semele, smitten by the thunderbolt, was born in Thebes. Heracles came from the union of Zeus and Alcmene here. They were the helpers of mankind, peace-lovers, guardians of security. They were your forefathers, Alexander. You should imitate them and be the benefactor of men'. See also Richard Stoneman (transl.), *Pseudo-Callisthenes, Alexander Romance* (London: Penguin Books, 1991); also Agnieszka Fulinska, 'Oriental Imagery and Alexander's Legend in Art: Reconnaissance', in Stoneman et al., *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*, pp. 383–404.

17. Nezāmi plays a triple role as author, narrator and character, introducing himself on the same narrative level as the other philosophers, acting as both reporter and interpreter. Similar authorial comments in different literary traditions are discussed in Anna Coons Pyeatt, *Lazarillo de Tormes and the Medieval Frametale Tradition*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 2005, pp. 124–25). The comments on the author's own passing away represent a difficulty: see de Blois, 'Eskandar-Nāma of Nezāmi', pp. 612–14.

18. On literary patronage in the Medieval Islamic world, see Jocelyn Sharlet, *Patronage and Poetry in the Islamic World: Social Mobility and Status in the Medieval Middle East and Central Asia* (London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2011). The business relation between patron and artist in the region might have been similar to that analysed for the Italian Renaissance in Jonathan K. Nelson and Richard J. Zeckhauser, *The Patron's Payoff. Conspicuous Commissions in Italian Renaissance Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Zeckhauser (p. 17) provides a useful comparison for Nezāmi's probable relations with his patron, on the basis of the Game Theory 'which analyzes interactive situations in which players usually try to influence the behaviour of one another, much as patrons strive to affect the behaviour of artists and vice versa.'

19. My reading thus reaches a different conclusion from that found in the pioneering essay by Chelkowski, 'Nizāmi's Iskandarnāmeh': 'We are almost certain through the textual analysis of the prologue … that Iskandarnāmeh was not a commissioned work' (p. 16).

20. A remark suggests that the poet chose a central character that was likely to attract the satisfaction and reward of a specific patron: *Craft a jewel about the deeds of Eskandar, and Eskandar himself will buy the jewel. A world-conqueror will be your sponsor (kharidār), your work will soon rise up to the stars!* (Dastgerdi, *Kolliyāt*, SN 8, 30–31: 'Khizr's Teachings in Storytelling', p. 932). J. C. Bürgel notes that the original patron, Nusrateddin, was called Eskandar (Bürgel, *Das Alexanderbuch*, p. 632).

21. Robert Burns, *Poems: Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Edinburgh, 1787), 'Dedication', p. vi. See also Karl Holzknecht, *Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages* (New York: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1966).

22. See de Blois, 'Eskandar-Nāma of Nezāmi', pp. 612–14.

23. See Dastgerdi, *Kolliyāt*, LM 4, 19-57, p. 450: Nezāmi recounts receiving the letter with the request to write 'on the love of Majnun' (*beyt* 25), and his subsequent hesitations to embark on a story 'without gardens and royal feasts, no rivers, no wine and no happiness!' (*beyt* 57).

24. See Storey and de Blois, *Persian Literature*, pp. 483–86; de Blois, 'Eskandar-Nāma of Nezāmi', pp. 612–14.

25. See Bürgel, *Das Alexanderbuch*, p. 663, who notes that there is a chronological problem in the relation between the rule of Izuddin Mas'ud b. Arslan (1211–18) in Mosul and Nezāmi's accepted death in 1209.

26. For a similar reference in the introductory parts of the *Haft Peykar* (Dastgerdi, *Kolliyāt*, HP 4, 19–20 and 24–25), see Meisami, *Haft Paykar*, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

27. André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. vii: 'All rewritings reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way.'

28. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Le Gai Savoir: Fragments Posthumes, été 1881–été 1882,* ed. M. Buhot de Launay, transl. P. Klossowski (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), p. 110, Aphorism 83, cited in M. Buhot de Launay, 'L'identité de l'original', in Yves Abrioux, Noelle Batt, eds, *Traduction(s), Confrontations, Négociations, Création, Collection Théorie Littérature Epistémologie* 25 (Saint-Denis : Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2008), p. 9. We may contrast Nezāmi's freedom to innovate with Greek, Alexandrian or Roman aesthetic theories towards *docti poetae*, who would be criticised for 'too wide a departure from the tradition in the way of independent invention, transformation of the traditional material, or even supplementary invention.' (George Converse Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace. A Study in the Classical Theory of Imitation* (Hildesheim: Gg Olms, 1966), p. 34).

29. Theodor Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans*, Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Class 38, Abhandlung V (Vienna: Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1890).

30. E. A. Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), esp. pp. 144–61, mentioned in Faustina Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus. A Survey of the Alexander Tradition through Seven Centuries: From Pseudo-Callisthenes to Suri* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2010), p.3.

31. Alexander is a negative character who ordered the destruction of the Iranian Fire Temples; see William L. Hanaway, 'Eskandar Nāma', *EIr* 8/6, pp. 609–12. On Jewish narratives on Alexander, see Aleksandra Kleczar, 'The Kingship of Alexander the Great in the Jewish Versions of the Alexander Narrative', in Stoneman et al., *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*, pp. 339–48.

32. For the generalising use of philosophy around Alexander, see for example Sulochana Asirvatham, 'Alexander the Philosopher in the Greco-Roman, Persian and Arabic Traditions', in Stoneman et al., *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*, pp. 311–26.

33. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 135–93; Doufikar-Aerts, 'King Midas' Ears on Alexander's Head', pp. 62–4, 69.

34. J. Christoph Bürgel, 'Conquérant, philosophe et prophète. L'image d'Alexandre le Grand dans l'épopée de Nezami', in Christophe Balay, Claire Kappler, Ziva Vesel, *Pand-o Sokhan. Mélanges offerts à Charles-Henri de Fouchécour* (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1994) pp. 65–78. Incidentally, there is also a Graeco-Roman traditional tripartite approach to Alexander's biography that goes back to the three books of Julius Valerius's translation of Pseudo-Callisthenes's life of Alexander the Great: 'Ortus Alexandri', 'Acti Alexandri', and 'Obitus Alexandri' – mentioned in E. D. Lasky, 'Encomiastic Elements in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus', *Hermes* 106: 2 (1978), pp. 357–76, n. 14.

35. Al-Fārābi, *Al Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Nasr al-Fārābī's Mabādi' Arā' ahl al-Madiina al-Fādila*, revised text with introduction, translation and commentary by Richard Walzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 433; Richard Walzer, 'Aspects of Islamic Political Thought: Al-Fārābī and Ibn Xaldūn', *Oriens* 16 (1963), pp. 40–60.

36. See Bürgel's in-depth discussion of this puzzling view of Alexander as a prototype of Muhammad his *Das Alexanderbuch*, pp. 602–9.

37. Philippe Vallat, 'Vrai philosophe et faux prophète selon Fārābi. Aspects historiques et théoriques de l'art du symbole', in Daniel De Smet, Meryam Sebti, Godefroid de Callatay, *Miroir et Savoir. La transmission d'un thème platonicien, des Alexandrins à la philosophie arabo-musulmane* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2008), p. 122.

38. Ibid., p. 129 (my translation); and Philippe Vallat, *Al-Fārābī. Le Livre du Régime politique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012), pp. xiii–xxix.

39. This unfortunate reputation, articulated by Southgate in 1978, is now a ubiquitous tag in comparative studies of the Alexander tradition in Iran: 'The version of Nezāmī, as a result of excessive interpolation of non-Alexander materials, lacks unity. Nezāmī retells a series of actions without exploring the feelings and emotions of the performers of these deeds.' Minou S. Southgate, *Iskandarnamah: A Persian Medieval Alexander-Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 'Afterword', p. 204. For another reticent attitude towards it, see, for example, Chelkowski, 'Nizami's Iskandarnameh', p. 26: 'Unfortunately, *Iskandarnāmeh* is not that quintessence of his achievement which Nizāmī had hoped that it would be.' See also Bertels, branding the use Nezāmī makes of his sources as 'arbitrary' (cited in Bürgel, 'On Some Sources of Nezami's Eskandarnama', p. 21); Julia Rubanovich also mentions Bertel's discussion of Nezāmī's attitude towards his predecessor in terms of poetic competition: Julia Rubanovich, 'Rewriting the Episode of Alexander and Candace in Medieval Persian Literature', ed. Markus Stock, *Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages: Transnational Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), pp. 123–25.

40. The misunderstanding about Nezāmī's alleged admiration for Ferdowsi has cascading consequences, as in this case, where the evident embarrassment among commentators about this adjective is given special mention in F. Steingass, *Comprehensive Persian–English Dictionary* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1975), p. 266: '*pīsh-pīrāy*, who adorns in front, a decorator (applied by Nizami to Firdausi)'. Nezāmī is not alone in his assessment of Ferdowsi: '[B]oth historians and panegyrists of [the Ghaznavid] and the early Seljuq period speak slightingly of the "false" and fabulous history represented by the Shāhnāma.' Meisami, *Haft Paykar*, 'Introduction', pp. xxii–xxiii.

41. Very different is the rewriting attitude of Amir Khosrow Dehlavi, for example, who specifically mentions that one of his aims is to respond to Nezāmī. See Christine van Ruymbeke, 'Persian Medieval Rewriters between Auctoritas and Autorship: The

Story of Khosrow and Shirin as a Case-study', in *Shahnama Studies III,* ed. Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

42. Dastgerdi, *Kolliyāt*, vol. 1 (KS 11, 52–53), p. 142.

43. See Christine van Ruymbeke, 'Firdausi's Dastan-i Khusrau va Shirin: Not Much of a Love Story!' in *Shahnama Studies I,* ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge: CMEIS, University of Cambridge, 2006), pp. 125–47. See also Djalal Khaleghi Motlagh, *Women in the Shahnameh: Their History and Social Status within the Framework of Ancient and Medieval Sources* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2012), pp. 67–71.

44. As *expressis verbis* interpreted by Wilberforce Clarke, *Sikandar Nama,e*, p. 139; Bürgel, *Das Alexanderbuch*, p. 46; and Dastgerdi, *Kolliyāt*, vol. 2, SN, p. 1,195. '*āzar-parast*' is another embarrassing qualifier. Dastgerdi does not comment on it. Wilberforce Clarke, *Sikandar Nama,e*, p. 139, has 'fire-worshipper'; Bürgel, *Das Alexanderbuch*, p. 46, has paraphrased this as 'persisches Edehlman'. But Steingass, *Comprehensive Persian–English Dictionary*, gives '*āzar*, Cross-tempered; trouble, grief, vexation; (in comp.) troubling, grieving, vexing; value, price' (p. 43). Hence my suggestion of 'troublesome' or 'reward-loving'.

45. And taken over in historical accounts, such as those from Dinawari (d. 903) or Tabari (d. 923). See William L. Hanaway, 'Eskandar Nāma', pp. 609–12. In the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition and in the Syriac texts, Alexander descends from the Pharaoh Nectanebo. Dastgerdi, in the critical apparatus to his edition, glosses unconvincingly (*Kolliyat*, SN 12, 43, p. 1,195): 'the book of the God-knowing man – this is the *Shāhnāmeh* of *hakim* Ferdowsi, which links the origin of Eskandar to Dārā, according to the history of the *dehqān*. The meaning of these two *beyts* is as follows: when I selected what is true, according to logic in the histories and the book of the God-knowing man, I did not find the flow of truth in these two sayings.'

46. This critical exercise is not a Nezamian innovation. The examination of several genealogies is characteristic of the Arabic Alexander tradition. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, p. 19.

47. Such as a 'Mowbed' (SN 18: 'Eskandar's Thoughts on Fighting Dārā'; and SN 22: 'Dārā Holds Council with the Nobles of Iran'), or a 'Rumi' (SN 19: 'Eskandar Invents the Mirror'). In the first part of the *Eqbālnāmeh*, the narrative resumes after the address to the *moqanni*, with a reference to a 'philosopher'. This is then left out when the hero reaches the prophet's stage. This naming of the storyteller goes back to the older Arabic Alexander tradition. See Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp. 35–45.

48. As proposed, against all contextual logic, by H. Wilberforce Clarke, *Sikandar Nama,e*, p. 139.

49. Dastgerdi, *Kolliyāt*, vol. 2, SN 13, pp. 946–49: 'Eskandar Is Educated by Nichomachus' (*The dehqān keeper of manuscripts*); Idem, SN 16, pp. 953–67: 'The War with the Zangi' (*The chronicle of the dehqān*); Idem, SN 29, pp. 1023–27: 'Eskandar Marries Roxane' (*The author of the royal chronicles*). Note that this episode is also present in the *Shāhnāmeh*, but the latter bears no resemblance to Nezāmi's story: Idem, SN 48, pp. 1120–24: 'Eskandar Reaches the Land of the Rus' (*The chronicler of these kings*); Idem, SN 49, pp. 1124–28: 'The First Battle against the Rus' (*The world-wise dehqān with his sophisticated pleasant words*); Idem, SN 62, pp. 1162–66: 'Eskandar Enters the Darkness' (*The chronicle of the dehqān*). See also the puzzling address to the *sāqi*, mentioning the wine from the jar of the old *dehqān*: Idem, SN 11, 1–2, p. 941: 'Nezāmi's Desire to Versify the *Sharafnāmeh*'.

50. Neither is it present in Ferdowsi's version of the Alexander Romance, or in any other of the versions current within the whole Iranian-Asian world descending from the work of the Pseudo-Callisthenes. This was confirmed to me in private correspondence with Richard Stoneman.

51. Jalal al-Din Rūmi, *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rūmi*, edited from the oldest manuscripts available, with critical notes, translation and commentary, by Reynard Nicholson, 8 vols (London: Gibb, 1925–40), vol. I, ll. 3,465–99. The secondary literature around the mystical teachings of Rūmi is copious. For a comprehensive introduction, see Franklin D. Lewis, *Rūmi, Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings and Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rūmi* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001).

52. Ghazāli uses the story in two of his works: the Arabic *al-Mizān al-'Amal*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'ref, 1964), pp. 207–8, and its Persian paraphrase (*Ih'ya 'ouloum ed-din ou vivification des sciences de la foi*, analysed and indexed by G.-H. Bousquet (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger, vol. XV, 1955), pp. 211–13), without any major shift in meaning. See Jules Janssens, 'L'âme-miroir: Al-Gazālī entre philosophie et mysticisme', in De Smet et al., *Miroir et Savoir*, pp. 203–17.

53. Nezāmi, *Kolliyat*, pp. 1,105–6; Wilberforce Clarke, *Sikandar Nama,e*, pp. 638–42; and Bürgel, *Das Alexanderbuch*, pp. 288–91. This version is referred to in scholarly art-historical studies, which derive from it information on how visual representations were considered in Medieval Islamic societies. In 'Nizami on Painters and Painting', in Richard Ettinghausen, ed., *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1971), pp. 9–21, Priscilla Soucek argues that Nezāmi tries to mention representational art in a way that will dispel the suspicions of the theologically minded: he shows that painting is as harmless as a reflection in a mirror. This interesting art-historical interpretation deals with what is only a side issue, and cannot be considered Nezāmi's reason for citing this contest.

54. Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. with introduction and notes by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1997), 'Republic', V, 473d.

55. Al-Fārābi, *Al Farabi on the Perfect State*, p. 6.

56. Plato, *Complete Works*, 'Theaetetes'.

57. ἐπισκέψασθαι (Plato, *Theaethetes* 186 b8).

58. See J. M. Cooper, 'Plato on Sense-Perception and Knowledge (Theaetetus, 184–186)', *Phronesis* 15 (1970), pp. 123–46.

59. See Christine van Ruymbeke, 'L'histoire du Concours des peintres Rumis et Chinis chez Nizami et Rumi. Deux aspects du miroir', in De Smet et al., *Miroir et Savoir*, pp. 273–91.

60. Cooper, 'Plato on Sense-Perception', pp. 138–39.

61. Jean Cohen, *Structure du langage poétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009 [1966]), p. 41 (my translation).

62. Van Ruymbeke, *Science and Poetry in Medieval Persia*.

63. Ibn al-Baytar, *al-Jami' li mufradat al-adawiya wa'l-aghdiya, Le Traité des Simples, tr. Française par L. Leclerc, Notices et extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale et autres bibliothèques* (no place, Institut National de France, repr. Institut du Monde Arabe (no date), vol. B, pp. 209–10. See also van Ruymbeke, *Science and Poetry in Medieval Persia*, p. 37.

64. I have analysed this example with other parallel passages in Christine van Ruymbeke, 'From Culinary Recipe to Pharmacological Secret for a Successful Wedding Night: The Scientific Background of Two Images Related to Fruit in the *Xamse* of Nezāmi Ganjavi', *Persica* XVII (2001), pp. 127–35.

65. See, for example, Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 752: '*shakkar-bādām*, Sugared-almonds. Dried apricots stuffed with almonds, the eye and lip of a mistress'. We should read this as a tempting recipe of sticky almonds fried in oil!
66. Ibn al-Baytar, *al-Jami*, citing Mansuri, Vol. C, p. 243.
67. Van Ruymbeke, *Science and Poetry in Medieval Persia*, p. 178.
68. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, pp. 50–51.

6

Sa'di on Love and Morals

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What is certain about Sa'di's life is that he flourished in the thirteenth century (seventh century AH), went to the Nezamiyeh College of Baghdad, travelled widely and lived long. It is clear from his love poetry that he was an ardent lover, and from much of his work that he was not a Sufi, although he cherished the ideals of Sufism and admired the legendary classical Sufis. There is also a remarkable humanist tendency in his works, produced two-and-a-half centuries before the emergence of Christian humanism in Europe. Not much else can be said about his life with the same degree of certainty.

In his introduction to *Bustan*, Sa'di writes that he had travelled far and wide and spent time with all manner of people. But none such as the people of Shiraz had he found in terms of sincerity and generosity. Returning to his land, he thought that they normally brought sugar as a gift from Egypt:

مرا گر تهی بود از آن قند دست　　سخن های شیرین تر از قند هست[1]

If I could not afford to bring sugar
I can offer words that are even sweeter

Thus he offered *Bustan* as a homecoming present to his fellow citizens. It is clear from this introduction that Sa'di had spent many years seeing the world. In *Golestan* there are many tales and anecdotes which speak of the places the narrator has been to, and experiences he has had in Baghdad, Mecca, Damascus, Alexandria, Diar Bekr, Hamadan, Isfahan, Balkh, Bamiyan, and even Kashgahr, which is now in China. There is a long tale in *Bustan* of the narrator's visit to Somnath in India, where he kills a keeper of a Hindu temple. Often, such stories have been believed to be autobiographical, by both Iranian and Western scholars, including Mohammad Khaza'eli,[2] John Boyle[3] and Henri Massè.[4] As I have shown elsewhere, this is extremely unlikely, and in fact there is little evidence that Sa'di ever travelled to the east.[5]

One thing is certain. Sa'di did go to the Nezamiyeh College in Baghdad. He says clearly in a verse: مرا در نظامیه ادرار بود ('I had a scholarship grant at Nezamiyeh').[6] And in an anecdote in *Golestan*, he says that, as a youth, he had been under the guidance of Abolfaraj ibn Jowzi, who flourished in the

thirteenth century and was a leading scholar as well as the *mohtaseb* – the chief enforcer of religious ethics and duties – in Baghdad.[7]

Birth and Death

For a long time, it used to be thought that Sa'di had been born in 1184 CE (580 AH) despite the fact that the traditional date of his death is between 1291 and 1294 (691 and 694), which would mean that he lived for 110 years. Both these dates have been vigorously defended – as late as the twentieth century, by Khaza'eli and Massé.[8] This too I have shown to be very unlikely.[9] Sa'di was very probably born between 1203 and 1209. The date of his death, as noted, has been consistently quoted to have been between 1291 and 1294, which would mean that he lived for a maximum of 91 years – a long, but not impossible, life for his time. Still, these dates may or may not be correct. In fact we lose chronological sight of Sa'di around 1281 (680).[10]

Sa'di left Fars in the wake of the arrival of the Mongols in pursuit of Jalal al-Din Menkaborni, Kharazmshah, in 1225 (622), when he was at least 16 years old, but was probably around 20. As noted, he presented *Bustan* to his fellow citizens as a gift for his return to Shiraz. In the introduction to that book he has recorded the date of its publication as 1257 (655):

<div dir="rtl">

ز ششصد فزون بود پنجاه و پنج   که پر در شد این نامبردار گنج

</div>

It was 655 years after hijra

When this famous treasure was filled with pearls[11]

He must therefore have returned home in the early to mid 1250s: given that he had left Shiraz in the 1220s, he had therefore spent 30 years of his life travelling abroad, learning, teaching, observing. He says clearly in a short and little-known *qasideh* not only that he had left Shiraz about 1225 (622) when Sa'd ibn Zangi was (the Solghorid) ruler in Fars, but that he returned when his son Abubakr ibn Sa'd was ruler, and the horrors of the first Mongol invasion had subsided:

<div dir="rtl">

جهان در هم افتاده چون موی زنگی   ...برون جستم از تنگ ترکان چو دیدم
ز گرگان بدر رفته آن تیز چنگی ...   چو باز آمدم کشور آسوده دیدم
کسی گفت سعدی چه شوریده رنگی   بپرسیدم این کشور آسوده کی شد
جهانی پر آشوب و تشویش و تنگی   چنان بود در عهد اول که دیدی
اتابک ابوبکر سعد ابن زنگی[12]   چنین شد در ایام سلطان عادل

</div>

... I left the Turks' den[13] when I saw

　　The world entangled like an African's hair

When I returned the country was calm

　　The wolves having shut their claws ...

Whence this calm, I asked someone;

　　Look how ignorant you are, he replied

That is how it was then as you saw

A world full of turmoil and horror
Thus it is now under the just Sultan
Atabak Abubakr ibn Sa'd Zangi

This he wrote in the mid 1250s, unsuspecting of the imminent second Mongol conquest, when Baghdad itself was sacked. He wrote two moving elegies, one in Persian and one in Arabic, mourning that catastrophe:

آسمان را حق بود گر خون بگرید بر زمین   بر زوال ملک مستعصم امیرالمومنین[14]

The heavens would be right to weep down blood full
For the fall of the realm of Musta'sim, commander of the faithful

Sa'di was a poet, a prose writer, a lover, a man of the world, as well as one who believed in personal propriety and social justice. He was a man of tolerance, moderation, great wit, and good sense – qualities which, added to his outstanding artistic talent, made him better known and more popular in his own time than any other poet in the history of Persian literature. In his works he alludes to the extent and spread of his popularity in the vast Persian-speaking lands of the time. There is also independent evidence for it. For example, a contemporary letter written in Anatolia (discovered by Mohammad Qazvini) opens with a short stanza by Sa'di, which means that the stanza was famous in that part of the world.[15]

Together with that of Ferdowsi, Rumi and Hafiz, his fame has been widespread in the Persian cultural region, and his works have been recited and appreciated even by illiterate Persian speakers throughout the ages. His fame is unique, however, in the fact that he is the only Persian poet about whom the common folk have made up anecdotes and legends – even about his legendary daughter, who is supposed to have inherited some of the wit of her great father.

Sa'di's main works comprise *Bustan*, *Golestan*, *ghazals*, and *qasidehs*, though he also wrote in other forms, such as *tarji'band* and *ruba'i*. He wrote on love, morals and manners, Sufism and good government. What follows is a brief review of his works on love and on good morals and manners.

A Brief Look at Sa'di's Love Poetry

No classical Persian poet was a greater or more passionate lover than Sa'di. One may even make the higher claim that he was the greatest lover, certainly the greatest lyricist of human love, in classical Persian poetry. Yet the impact of *Bustan* and *Golestan* has been so great that they have overshadowed the work of Sa'di as a poet of love songs. Not only have they been seldom translated into Western languages compared with those two books, and especially *Golestan*, but even in Iran Sa'di's *ghazals* have never been appreciated as much as they deserve in critical and scholarly studies.

Sa'di is the champion of human love, the mundane and corporeal love of the flesh, and Rumi of mystical love, of the Sufi longing for return to and reunion with the origins of all existence. Hafiz integrates the two such that, often in the

same *ghazal*, they are both expressed with equal passion, or the expression of the one type of love at the same time implies the other, there being two layers in the meaning of the same verse. Many classical critics and scholars, both Persian and Western, have tended to interpret Sa'di's love poetry as mystical. Among British scholars, Reynold Nicholson has expressed this view while, not surprisingly, adding that Sa'di's mysticism is shallow, though his lyricism is great.[16] The Iranian critic Rashid Yasemi has also described the whole of Sa'di's *ghazals* as mystical and esoteric – except that, unlike Nicholson, he finds them profound and convincing.[17] This view flies in the face of the facts, since the great majority of Sa'di's *ghazals* are patently about the love of the flesh, and that of both sexes as well. Of his more than 700 *ghazals*, about 10 per cent fall into the mystical-cum-ethical category. The rest refer to his rich and enviable love experience.[18]

The theme of love is of course as old as the hills, and naturally therefore it emerged in the poetry of the tenth-century classical poets who wrote in New Persian. But the concepts of love, lover, beloved, and so on, evolved in various ways form the tenth and eleventh centuries to the thirteenth, when Sa'di flourished. First, there is hardly any major eleventh-century poet whose lyrics can be truly described as mystical. To be strict, it is from the twelfth century that mystical and, more specifically, Sufi poetry begins to rise and mature through such major poets as Sana'i and Attar, until the thirteenth century when, in the hands of Rumi, Araqi, Shabestari, Awhadi, and so on, it reaches its highest elevations.

But the nature of mundane and corporeal love also begins to evolve from the eleventh century through to the thirteenth: in the earlier period the lover was, if not superior, at least equal to the person he loved. The eleventh-century Farrokhi Sistani, for example, writes about making up with his beloved 'after a long war', and the beloved bowing to him, it being clear that in most such cases the beloved is a servant or slave. In Nezami Ganjavi's romances, Khosrow and Shirin are equal as successful lovers, whereas Leyli and Majnun are also equal, though in total failure. It is only Farhad who is selfless before the love of Shirin, the superior beloved. However, it is from Sa'di and the thirteenth century that the lover consistently insists that he is inferior to the beloved, would do anything for so much as a glance by her, and is ready to be trampled under her feet and become the talk of the town for loving her.

Sa'di's *ghazals* may be divided into four categories: those which express his love for the beloved; those which describe the beloved; those which express the joy of union; and those which reflect the sadness of separation. Inevitably, there is some overlap among these four categories. Yet there is enough distinction between them to justify such a typology.

Whether in the expression of love, the description of the beloved or any other category of love poems for a human being, idealism is the fundamental characteristic, not just of Sa'di's but of all classical Persian poets from the

twelfth and especially thirteenth century onwards. Indeed, it may be fairly claimed that Sa'di's love poems for human beings raise this classical genre almost to the level of perfection, and are unsurpassed, if even equalled, by the best of what came after him. Love is virtually one-sided; the lover lacks an ego vis-à-vis the beloved, or his self is denied and annihilated by the beloved's supreme existence.

There may be occasional complaints about the attitude and behaviour of the beloved – her lack of response to the poor lover's begging for her attention, or her lofty disregard for the pain and suffering of the lover; but all such complaints are muted, qualified, and sometimes regretted, even in the same poem.

It is not difficult to see the influence of mysticism and mystic love in this romantic idealisation of the object of love and the abject self-denial of the lover. Yet, at least as regards Sa'di's love poetry, matters do not simply stop at that. There is obvious flesh and blood, which sometimes the poet and lover succeeds in enjoying in carnal passion.

The group of Sa'di's *ghazals* that merely contain expressions of love, describe and demonstrate the breadth and depth of the lover's love and desire for the beloved, occasionally but not often also describe some of the qualities of the beloved, and some of the feelings of the lover for being alienated from her.

In the following *ghazal*, the lover had tried hard to avoid falling in love, but, upon seeing the beloved, all his efforts proved futile. Not only did he lose his 'reason' in the face of the beloved; he could not even keep his love a secret. The poem is impeccable, but its climax is reached when the lover bids the beloved to go and see him at night: 'Come to me today in peace tonight'. He asks her to see him in peace, which means to satisfy his desire. And he uses 'today' in the sense of 'this day', which also includes 'tonight'.

سر عشق

نبود بر سر آتش میسرم که نجوشم	هزار جهد بکردم که سر عشق بپوشم
شمایل تو بدیدم نه عقل ماند و نه هوشم	بهوش بودم از اول که دل به کس نسپارم
دگر نصیحت مردم حکایت است به گوشم	حکایتی ز دهانت به گوش جان من آمد
که من قرار ندارم که دیده از تو بپوشم …	مگر تو روی بپوشی وفتنه باز نشانی
که دیده خواب نکردست از انتظار تودوشم	بیا به صلح من امروز در کنار من امشب
که از وجود تو مویی به عالمی نفروشم	مرا به هیچ بدادی و من هنوز بر آنم
که تندرست ملامت کند چو من بخروشم	به زخم خورده حکایت کنم زدست جراحت
سخن چه فایده گفتن چو پند می ننیوشم	مرا مگوی که سعدی طریق عشق رها کن
وگر مراد نیابم به قدر وسع بکوشم[19]	به راه بادیه رفتن به از نشستن باطل

The Secret of Love

I tried hard to hide the secret of love and desire
                    It was not possible to stop boiling on fire
I was alert from the start not to fall in love
                    All reason faded seeing your face above

Your mouth told the ears of my soul a story
        And now the people's warning is all a story
You alone can stop the riot by hiding thy face
        I cannot bear to turn away my face …
Come to me today in peace tonight
        I have not slept longing for you all night
You gave me up for nothing yet I am determined
        Not to sell a hair of yours for earth, sky and wind
I'll tell about my pain to someone who is wounded
        Telling a healthy person I would be reprimanded
Do not say 'Sa'di give up love and passion'
        It will have no effect since I will not listen
To enter a desert is better than to remain inactive
        Even if I make it not I'll try to remain active

Now let us turn to the second group of Sa'di's *ghazals*, the descriptions of the beloved. The description of the beloved's physical attributes proceeds at the same idealistic level as the expression of love. The beloved's physical appearance is perfect and in complete harmony, according to the contemporary aesthetic values. Her figure is often likened to a well-proportioned cypress tree, her mouth to a flower bud, her body to silk and silver, her hair to a long chain, and so on.

In the following poem the beloved is described as being no less than the site of Kaaba, around which he could run as they do in the rituals of Hajj. She is a harvest of flower whose body is beyond description, and is only reflected by her garment; and the sun would be ashamed to set its eyes on her. There is nothing about her which is not worthy of praise: figure, speech, movements, and so on.

<div dir="rtl">

جمال کعبه

آفرین بر جان و رحمت بر تنت	ای که رحمت می نیاید بر منت
کاندر آید بامداد از روزنت	شرمش از روی تو باید آفتاب
یا سخن، یا آمدن ، یا رفتنت	قامتت گویم که دلبند است و خوب
خود حکایت می کند پیراهنت	حسن اندامت نمی گویم به شرح
رحمتی کن بر گدای خرمنت	ای که سر تا پایت از گل خرمن است
سیرتی چون صورت مستحسنت	ماهرویا مهربانی پیشه کن
تا طوافی می کنم پیرامنت	ای جمال کعبه رویی باز کن
تا نگیرم در قیامت دامنت	دست گیر این چند روزم در حیات
و اندرون جان بسازم مسکنت[20]...	عزم دارم کز دلت بیرون کنم

</div>

Site of Kaaba

You who have no pity for me at all
        Blessed be your body and soul

What should I praise, your figure
                    Your movements or speech of sugar
Of your face must be ashamed the sun
                    When through the window it comes on
I shall not elaborate on your body
                    Your garment itself tells its story
You who are a harvest of flower
                    Give some to your flower's beggar
O ravishing beauty try to be as kind
                    As your moral beauty would demand
O site of Kaaba show me a sign
                    So I can turn around you like a divine
Take my hand in the few days of this world
                    So I will not hold you to God in the next world
Out of my heart I intend to throw you whole
                    And instead give you an abode within my soul ...

The next group of Sa'di's love poetry is on the lovers' union. Union and separation are the most prevalent themes in the classical *ghazal*, one implying the other. *Vasl* literally means joining or attachment, and socially, the coming together of the lover and beloved. It has a wide meaning, including being accepted and approved by the beloved, getting back together after a period of alienation, seeing each other again after a physical separation, especially a journey, or indeed being together alone in loving union. *Shab-e vasl*, the night of union, would normally mean literally the night of getting together in the bond of love.

It is commonplace that describing positive ideas and events is normally more difficult than negative ones, irrespective of the subject, just as it is easier to destroy than to build. This is particularly true of writing on fulfilled love, on union, rather than on failed love, on separation, in classical Persian poetry, especially given the romantic and highly subjective context in which classical love and loving proceed. Besides being an undisputed master of writing *ghazals* on pure human love, Sa'di's genius shines particularly when he takes on the difficult task of writing on the lover's union with the beloved, which incidentally reflects a rich personal experience.

The following *ghazal* is a gem. It is one of the best Sa'di wrote on union. Putting aside the richness of the imagery and other literary devices, it is a most vivid, though still idealistic, description of a night being spent with the beloved. The lover is ready to die once his desire is fulfilled. The thirsty come to life, he says, at the sight of water; he is immersed in it and yet is thirstier. He would rather they made love in the garden, but is worried that strangers, neighbours, would catch them and give them away. He uses the subtlest excuse for putting out the light, by 'cutting off the tongue' of the candle so it could not tell others. He uses as subtle an excuse to take off his clothes 'if it comes between us'.

<div dir="rtl">

در آغوش یار

یک امشبی که در آغوش شاهد شکرم   گرم چو عود بر آتش نهند غم نخورم

چو التماس بر آید هلاک باکی نیست   کجاست تیر بلا گو بیا که من سپرم

ببند یک نفس ای آسمان دریچه صبح   بر آفتاب، که امشب خوش است با قمرم

ندانم این شب قدر است یا ستاره روز   تویی برابر من یا خیال در نظره؟

خوشا هوای گلستان و عشق در بستان   اگرنبودی تشویش بلبل سحرم

بدین دو دیده که امشب ترا همی بینم   دریغ باشد فردا به دیگری نگرم

روان تشنه بر آساید از وجود فرات   مرا فرات ز سر بر گذشت و تشنه ترم...

سخن بگوی که بیگانه پیش ما کس نیست   بغیر شمع و همین ساعتش زبان ببرم

میان ما بجز این پیرهن نخواهد بود   وگر حجاب شود تا به دامنش بدرم

مگوی سعدی ازاین عشق جان نخواهد برد   بگو کجا برم آن جان که از غمت ببرم[21]

</div>

In the Beloved's Embrace

> *This one night in my beloved's embrace*
>> *If they put me on fire it will leave no trace*
> *Once my desire is fulfilled, death brings no fear*
>> *I am ready like a shield for the arrow of fate*
> *O heavens shut the morning's window to the sun*
>> *Tonight I am happy with the moon as it shone*
> *Is this the morning star or the Sacred Night*
>> *It is you in front of me or just your thought?*
> *I wish we could go and sleep out on the lawn*
>> *If I did not mind the nightingale of the dawn*
> *These two eyes with which tonight I see you*
>> *Pity if I set them on someone else tomorrow*
> *The soul of the thirsty is soothed by a river*
>> *In a river I am drowned and still thirstier …*
> *Speak! There is no stranger except the candle*
>> *Whose tongue I will cut off this moment and handle*
> *Nothing would separate us except this garment*
>> *And if it comes between us I will tear it apart*
> *Do not say Sa'di will not survive this love*
>> *Say how I can shed the sadness of your love*

The last of our four categories of Sa'di's love poetry is the theme of separation. As noted above, this subject is generally easier to write on than is the union of lovers. Sa'di's numerous love poems are not entirely crowded with songs of separation, but more particularly his poems on separation are not normally as hopeless and tragic as many such poems by others – for example, Vahshi Bafqi's heartrending if a little too melodramatic account of what he calls his 'depression' and 'disorientation'.

The following poem describes realistically the experience of going through the night totally absorbed and preoccupied by the beloved in her absence and

probable inconstancy. It is a long night in which there is melancholic, anxious and uncontrolled thinking, and so no chance at all of a wink of sleep. The morning is dragging and the dawn does not arrive either to lighten the dark or to make cocks and muezzin break the silence of the night. The poem ends on a pessimistic note.

شب تنهایی

چه خیال ها گذر کرد و گذر نکرد خوابی   سر آن ندارد امشب که برآید آفتابی

بزه کردی و نکردند موذنان ثوابی   به چه دیر ماندی ای صبح که جان شب برآمد

همه بلبلان بمردند ونماند جز غرابی   نفس خروس بگرفت که نوبتی بخواند

که به روی یار ماند که برافکند نقابی   نفحات صبح دانی ز چه روی دوست دارم

که در آب مرده بهتر که در آرزوی آبی...   سرم از خدای خواهد که به پایش اندر افتد

تو به دست خویش فرمای اگرم کنی عذابی   نه چنان گناهکارم که به دشمنم سپاری

عجب است اگر نگردد که بگردد آسیابی   دل همچو سنگت ای دوست به آب چشم سعدی

که هزار بار گفتی و نیامدت جوابی[22]   برو ای گدای مسکین و دری دگر طلب کن

A Night of Loneliness

> *The sun does not deign to rise this night*
>> *What thoughts traversed the mind and no sleep in sight*
> *Why are you so late, o morning, that I am about to fall*
>> *You sinned and the muezzins failed to make their call*
> *The cock is choking just to try and crow once timed*
>> *All the nightingales died and only the ravens survived*
> *Do you know why I love the morning breeze?*
>> *It feels as if the beloved has taken off her veil*
> *My head begs of God to fall down to her feet*
>> *Since it is better to die in water than of thirst ...*
> *I am not guilty such that you deliver me to my enemy*
>> *Do it by your own hands if you wish to torture me*
> *Sa'di's tears alas do not turn your heart of stone*
>> *Whereas a mill can turn by the water of my eye alone*
> *Go off miserable beggar and find another door to solicit*
>> *Here you begged a thousand times and got no reply for it.*[23]

Morals and Manners

Advice and admonition on morals and manners is as old as the pre-Islamic *Andarz* literature.[24] From the earliest classical poetry, usually short pieces were written regarding right and wrong. In the eleventh century, Naser Khosrow was almost the exception that proved the rule in writing didactics and admonitions, although all in the role of a hard-headed Ismaili campaigner. In the same century, Khajeh Abdollah Ansari wrote his fine and more-or-less mystical *Meditations* (*Monajat Nameh*), but they do not quite qualify as didactic writings. The twelfth century is the age of *qasideh* par excellence, and apart from panegyric (which however began with a lyrical prelude), there are

occasional pieces or parts of a piece that contain instruction and admonition, putting aside Mas'ud Sa'd Salman's prison ballads, which are usually laments rather than didactics. This is apart from such poets as Sana'i and Attar, who somehow intermingle didactic teaching with predominantly mystical themes. On one occasion Attar even writes the plain verse: 'Try to keep away from those who take *riba* / because they are enemies of God'. Kahqani, Anvari and some others also occasionally pass on didactic remarks, but once again it is the thirteenth-century Sa'di who writes gems like *Bustan* and *Golestan*, which systematically cover the whole field.

There are few aspects of life on which Sa'di does not speak. In *Bustan* and *Golestan*, but also in some of his *ghazals*, *qasidehs* and other pieces which counsel and advise on private and social attitudes and behaviour, he teaches morals and manners and advocates a model of good, clean, fair and considerate public and private conduct, which would afford its practitioner a healthy, contented and socially useful life in this world, as well as assuring him a good place in the other.

In reviewing Sa'di's teachings, two points should be borne in mind. One is his extraordinarily rich and varied personality and experiences as a poet; a lover; an admirer of mystical values; a doctor of his contemporary sciences, which included jurisprudence, theology and philosophy; a traveller in much of the Islamic world of his day; an acquaintance of rulers and viziers; and finally a venerable sage, not just of Shiraz but of Persian lands and beyond. It was a few decades after his death that Ibn Battuta, the well-known Tunisian traveller, observed the cult in which he was being held in his home city; and far beyond there he found in China singers singing one of his *ghazals* with a Chinese accent, and without any knowledge of its meaning except perhaps the reference in one of its verses to 'the portrait artist of China'.[25]

The other point is his time and place. The thirteenth century was a very different age from our own. And even then, things were considerably different between the worlds of Islam and of Christian and feudal Europe. The question of 'historical relativism' has been subject to controversy for ideological, political and moral reasons. Although the matter should be of merely scientific and philosophical interest, it tends to arouse emotional reactions, sometimes even among scientists and philosophers. Its equivalent in our time is the concept of 'cultural relativism', which gives rise to even more intense emotions, when for example it is wondered whether the criteria of human rights in a Third World country should be adjudged by that particular county's cultural and religious norms or according to the contents of universal declaration of human rights.

Whatever the solution to such social and political controversies may be, it would be difficult to maintain that contemporary norms and values could simply and without qualification be used to judge ideas and events in medieval times anywhere on the globe. Echoing Vico, Isaiah Berlin went further, arguing

that it would be, if not virtually impossible, then extremely difficult for us to arrive at a realistic understanding of ancient and classical cultures and civilisations.[26] Instead of the concept of 'historical relativism', he proposed that of 'cultural pluralism'.[27]

In the thirteenth century, Islam in its variety of schools and sects was the central religious and spiritual framework within which virtually everyone lived and died in Islamic lands. Government was not just absolute, but also arbitrary, the word of the ruler being law, as it had been since the foundation of ancient Persia. Early in the century, Mongol hordes had overrun the country. In the middle of the century the second wave of Mongol invasion, led by Hulagu Khan, overthrew both the remnants of Persian Ismai'lis and the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad – the latter in the same year that Sa'di wrote his *Golestan*. It did not take long for the autonomous government of Fars, Sa'di's homeland, with its capital Shiraz, to fall effectively under the rule of the new Mongol Ilkhan Empire, which was centred in Azerbaijan.[28] It was an age in which Sufism became widespread among ordinary people, and a definite subject of both conviction and disputation within the elite.

Considering the time and place, and the social and cultural context, Sa'di's views show him to be a highly civilised man, often even by today's standards. It would have been astonishing if he did not think that Islam was more righteous than Judaism and Christianity, although even here the references are very few and the sentiments not strong. What is very unusual is his religious tolerance, if not relativism – for example, in the story about the argument between the Jew and the Muslim in *Golestan*, where he virtually implies that the Muslim is not necessarily more righteous than the Jew, in an argument that could run the risk of excommunication even today in an orthodox Islamic framework.[29]

Sa'di holds that morals and manners may be learned but are not necessarily a result of formal education. More often, they are related to upbringing in the wider sense of the term, to the personality of the individual and to social norms and mores.[30] *Golestan* and *Bustan* contain a great many instructions and admonitions regarding what may be described as 'good manners and moral behaviour' – in favour of fairness, moderation, contentment, charitableness, humility; and against jealousy, backbiting, meanness, greed. These ideals are more or less the same as those which are still preached in our own time, although the stories and anecdotes that Sa'di uses to advance them, directly or indirectly, are often outmoded and time-bound.

A whole chapter of *Bustan* is titled 'On Beneficence'; but Sa'di's advocacy of charity goes beyond mere recommendation of material help to the needy. It also encompasses a wide range of moral and spiritual generosity, even self-sacrifice, towards one's fellow human beings. There are two stories about Hatam Ta'i, the legendary Arab nobleman of the Tay tribe. He is believed to have flourished at just about the advent of Islam, and been praised by the

prophet Mohammad because of his extraordinary charitableness and generosity. According to the first story, Hatam had an Arab stallion that was unique in strength, stamina and speed:

که بر برق پیشی گرفتی همی...   صبا سرعتی ، رعد بانگ ادهمی

Swift as the wind, loud as thunder
It overtook lightening and did wonder
At its gallop rained dews on the plane
As if April clouds passed in its wake
Like a flood running through the desert
The wind falling behind it like dust

The Sultan of Rum was told both about Hatam's great generosity and the uniqueness of this horse in his stables. He decided to test the legend about him, and send a delegation to ask for his horse:

که دعوی خجالت بود بی گواه ...[31]   به دستور دانا چنین گفت شاه

To the wise minister the shah said
Claims without proof are better not made
I shall ask Hatam for that Arab horse
If he was generous and agreed with this course
He would show the glory of being great
Otherwise he is just like wind in the air

The delegation arrived at Hatam's camp in the evening. He gave them 'gold and sugar' and had a horse killed to feed them. Next morning he was told about their mission:

Hatam responded with sadness and melancholy
Biting his hand remorsefully
Why did you, good sirs, he asked
Not give me the message at times passed
For I had that wind-like swift stallion
Last night grilled to feed you gentlemen
For I knew that because of flooding and rain
We could not reach the meadows in the terrain
I had no other way of feeding you
Only the stallion was here for treating you…

We may observe that Hatam's generosity goes far beyond an ordinary act of beneficence. If he had just given them the horse, it would have been an act of considerable sacrifice, but one which would have been publicly acknowledged. Apart from that, his dear and extraordinary horse would have been alive, even though it would have been in someone else's possession. But he sacrificed his horse to feed guests, not suspecting that his great sacrifice would be publicly known.

The next story about Hatam's generosity of spirit goes even further, as Sa'di himself points out. A ruler in Yemen was known to be extremely generous: 'You could call him the cloud of beneficence / Since gold rained from his presence.' Once, at a feast thrown by him, someone began to speak about Hatam and someone else added his voice in his praise. The ruler became jealous and decided to have Hatam killed, thinking that as long as he was alive he would not himself enjoy a unique reputation in generosity. He therefore sent someone to find Hatam and kill him. When the assassin reached Tay territory, he met a man who acted as his host for the night and was so kind that it made a very good impression on him. At dawn the host begged the guest to stay for a few days longer. He replied that he could not, because he had a great mission. The host told him that, if he would confide in him, he would try to help him in any way he could. He replied:

که فرخنده رای است و نیکو سیر؟ ... ³²   در این ملک حاتم شناسی مگر

Have you heard of Hatam in this land
                Who is high-spirited and well-intentioned?
The ruler of Yemen has asked for his head
                I do not know what hostility lies behind it
All I ask you to do my friend
                Is to guide me to find his abode

And here is the climax of the story:

'I am Hatam', the man laughed and said
                'Just this moment cut off my head
For when the morning light is effected
                You will be hurt or disappointed'

The would-be assassin was completely disarmed. Not only that: he fell on his knees and said that he could not even throw a flower at Hatam, let alone kill him. He went back to Yemen, and the ruler 'read in his face' that he had not fulfilled his mission. He told him the story. The ruler was full of admiration for Hatam, and gave the man a gift of money.

In *Golestan* there is a story of a different kind about Hatam:

They asked Hatam Ta'i if he had seen anyone with greater spirit than himself anywhere in the world. He said: Yes, one day I had thrown a feast for Arab leaders and sacrificed forty camels. Then I went to the edge of a desert to see to a need and saw a man gathering thorns and thistles. I asked him, 'Why don't you go to Hatam's reception, as a whole crowd have gathered round his feast'. He said:
Who earns his bread by his own action
                Will not go under Hatam's obligation
I found him superior to me in greatness of spirit.³³

There is a story about Abraham in *Bustan* which once again goes beyond the question of ordinary generosity, and has had a long career in the West as a

model for religious tolerance. It made a wide impact in the West when it was first translated, and has been cited as evidence of Sa'di's humanism.[34] Once, a week passed and a needy guest did not arrive at Abraham's 'guest house', i.e. his home. He was so kind that he did not have his own meal on time, and went and searched the desert looking for a guest. There he found an old man, and most affectionately invited him to dinner. The old man accepted the invitation. But when, together with other members of the household, they sat around the cloth on which the meal was served, the old man refused to repeat the grace ('In the name of Allah ...') before starting to eat. It turned out that he was a 'fire-worshipper'. Abraham turned him out, and then:

به هیبت ملامت کنان کای خلیل ...[35]   سروش آمد از کردگار جلیل

Abraham heard God Almighty speak
            Severely chastising him, saying
  'A hundred years I gave him life and meals
            And you hated him in a moment of unease
  If he prostrates himself before fire
            Why should you of your kindness tire?'

The story concludes that kindness and beneficence must be unconditional, and that no qualification should be required for extending them.

The following story is in the second chapter of *Golestan*, 'On the Ways of Dervishes':

A burglar entered the home of an ascetic. The more he looked for goods the less he found any. He was upset. The ascetic realised and threw the klim on which he was sleeping in the burglar's way so he would not be disappointed:
I have heard it said that the men of God
            Do not make unhappy their enemies
How could you ever attain their ways
            When you make war with your friends?
The friendship of the pure is the same in one's face and behind one's back. They do not criticise you in your absence and die for you in your presence:
Before you, like a peaceable sheep
            Behind you, like a man-eating wolf
  *
Who mentions to you the fault of others
            Will talk about your faults to others.[36]

Also in *Golestan* is the story of a burglar who has stolen something from a dervish. The judge rules that his hand be cut off. The dervish pleads for him, saying that he has no complaint. The judge says that, nevertheless, he has committed a crime and must be punished. The dervish says that what little he

owned was in the nature of public endowment (*vaqf*), and taking from an endowment was not a crime. The judge let the burglar go, but rebuked him for stealing from a man such as the dervish. The burglar replied that he was the man worth stealing from.[37]

The following story, in *Bustan*'s second chapter, 'On Beneficence', is another example of the greatness of heart and spirit, beyond mere material help to others:

<div dir="rtl">

بزارید وقتی زنی پیش شوی   که دیگر نخر نان ز بقال کوی …[38]

</div>

Once a woman begged her husband to stop
> *Buying bread from their local shop*
'Go and shop in the corn market
> *He does not seem to be straight*
Because his customers are few
> *But for chasing flies he has nothing to do'*
The husband, who shopped in the shop
> *Said 'O light of our home, please put up*
He set up shop here seeing us as customers
> *It will be unchivalrous to deny him our purchases'*
Take the road of those who are liberated;
> *Now on your feet, hold the downtrodden*
Be generous since the men of God
> *Buy in shops which are not on top …*

A big-hearted and generous man did not have much money. Someone who was in jail for failure to pay a debt wrote and asked him to put up a small amount of money so they would free him from prison. The good man did not have the money. So he asked the man's creditors to let him go upon his guarantee to deliver him on demand. They agreed, and let him go. The good man then went and told the prisoner to run away from town:

<div dir="rtl">

وز آنجا به زندانی آمد که خیز   و زین شهر تا پای داری گریز …[39]

</div>

He then went to the prisoner and said
> *Run away from town fast as a bird*
Like a sparrow whose cage is opened
> *He did not remain in jail for one moment*
Like the morning breeze he left the land
> *So swiftly that the wind was left behind*
They then seized the good man
> *To deliver the money or the man …*
They say he remained in jail for some time
> *And neither complained nor made a fuss*
Times passed and he had sleepless nights
> *A pious man went to see him and asked*

'I am sure you are not in others' debt
                              How then did you find yourself in jail?' ...
He said, 'I saw a poor man weary of fetters
                              I could only save him by taking his place
I did not regard it to be just and fair
                              I being free and he being in jail ...' [40]

Still in the same chapter of *Bustan*, Sa'di says that once he saw a young man with a sheep running after him. He told him that it was the leash that made the sheep follow him. Immediately he unleashed the sheep and began to run, with the sheep freely running after him. Afterwards the young man returned to him and said it was not the leash that had brought the sheep with him but kindness, which was just like a leash around its neck. The narrator concludes that one should display kindness even to bad people:

Be kind to the bad, o good man
                              A dog would be grateful if you fed it
A dog's teeth will not bite a person
                              Whose cheese the dog has eaten. [41]

Someone's donkey had fallen in a ditch of mud in the desert at night during a storm. In despair, he began to swear at any and every person, including the lord of the land. The ruler happened to be passing by, hearing all the invectives hurled at him. Someone told him to kill the unfortunate man. But he looked, saw him in dire straits, forgave him, and gave him gifts as well:

ز سوداش خون در دل افتاده بود ... [42]   یکی را خری در گل افتاده بود

A man's ass had fallen into a ditch of mud
                              Its worry had brought to boil his blood
In the desert, with cold, rain and flood
                              Darkness had fallen on flood and mud
All night long until the sun rose
                              He cursed and swore without pause
His tongue spared none, enemy or friend
                              Not even the sultan who owned the land
By chance the lord of that vast territory
                              Was passing by and found it unseemly
He heard those unwise words and unkind
                              Neither could he bear to listen nor respond
He looked at his guards with embarrassment
                              Wondering at the man's words of harassment
A guard told him to raise the sword on the man
                              Who swore at everyone's daughters and women
The exalted sultan looked and found
                              That he was in trouble, his ass in the mud

He forgave the poor man's transgression
                    Suppressing his anger at his indiscretion
He gave him money, horse and garment
                    How nice is kindness instead of punishment
Someone said 'You old stupid fool
                    You were very lucky', he said 'cool
If I mourned on account of my pain
                    He was generous in his own vein'
It is easy to do wrong in response to a wrong
                    A good man is good to one who does wrong

Someone found a dog in a desert dying of thirst. He turned his hat into a bowl, filled it with water in a well, and let the dog drink from it. The Prophet heard about it and said that God had forgiven all of the man's sins. It is important to note that dogs in Islam are ritually unclean:

برون از رمق در حیاتش نیافت ...⁴³   یکی دربیابان سگی تشنه یافت

Someone found a thirsty dog in the desert
                    Barely alive, incapable of effort
The good man turned his hat into a bowl
                    And fastened his head-dress to it like a rope
He set to serve the dog and opened his arms
                    Thus did he give water to the disabled dog
The Prophet informed people of his position
                    That the Supreme Judge forgave all his transgressions
If you happen to be unkind, think more
                    Try to be kind and put beneficence fore
Not even to the dog was kindness lost
                    How could it be lost to a man, robust?
Be kind and generous as much as you can
                    God has shut off charitableness to no man ...
Many a powerful person fell from power
                    Many a downtrodden got their desire
Do not break the heart of the meek
                    One day you too may become weak.

Of the maxims of proper conduct and good behaviour which Sa'di advocates, humility is one that tops the list. In his works, humility, modesty and humble behaviour are part of a general maxim of good relationships with fellow human beings. He spares no word, anecdote or story to emphasise the importance, even necessity, of this maxim. Not only does he believe it to be morally just and socially desirable, but he says on a number of occasions that humility is a winner, and will bring good to the person himself. But he does also make the point that too much humility displayed towards bullies would be interpreted as a sign of weakness, and should be avoided.

A long chapter in *Bustan*, 'On Humility', is devoted to this subject, although it is also occasionally treated elsewhere in the book and in *Golestan*. Here is the preamble to the chapter:

پس ای بنده افتادگی کن چو خاک ...[44]   ز خاک آفریدت خداوند پاک

God created you from dust
          Be humble like dust, you must
Be not greedy, offensive and dire
          You were made of dust, be not fire
When the fire was rebellious at Creation
          Dust instead put itself in a humble station
Since that was proud and this humble
          They made humans of dust and demons of fire
*
A drop of water dropped down with the rain
          It felt small seeing the breadth of the ocean
Thinking 'Who am I where is the sea?
          Where there is sea I might as well not be'
Since it showed modesty, the mother of pearl
          Held it in its bosom and raised it as pearl
It was elevated to such an extent
          That it turned into a glittering jewel
It rose high because it showed humility
          It began to exist by pretending to nullity
In the very intelligent humility is found
          A branch heavy with fruit lies on the ground

In *Golestan* there is an allegorical story in verse of the debate between the curtain and the flag. The flag complains to the curtain that, while they both serve the sultan, the curtain is in the company of nice and pretty servants, whereas it, the flag, spends all its time on the move, being carried by soldiers and exposed to dust and wind. It claims that it works harder and takes more trouble in its services, and yet the curtain has a much better time without taking one step out. The curtain replies:

My head is at the threshold
          Yours is up in the clouds
Whoever raises his neck high
          Would fall on his neck from the sky[45]

Even when one is wronged, one should respond to the wrong-doer with forgiveness and generosity. This is perhaps the most well-known Christian virtue, but its source in Sa'di is more likely to be classical mystic teachings. It must be mentioned, however, that Sa'di is not always consistent on this point. He says in *Golestan*:

I complained to a sage that a person has accused me of immorality. He said, embarrass him by responding kindly:

Behave well so that the maligner
>> *Cannot point to your failures*
If properly tuned is the lyre
>> *It will not be corrected by its player.*[46]

There are stories on the same theme in Chapter 4 of *Bustan*. A drunkard beat up a good man. Someone told him that he should retaliate, since 'forbearance should not be extended to this ignoramus'. He said a drunk would attack people, but a wise and intelligent man should not attack an ignorant drunkard:

The mature person lives with kindness
>> *He responds with kindness to unkindness.*[47]

There immediately follows the story of the dog that bit the leg of a desert-dweller, shifting the metaphor from humans to animals. All night he cried and moaned in pain. His little girl scolded him for not having retaliated. He replied that he too had teeth, but he would never bite a dog's leg:

Even if they hit my head with a sword
>> *I will never bite a dog's leg.*[48]

There is a long story in *Bustan*, also in Chapter 4, of a sinful man in Jesus Christ's times – which may be regarded as even stronger evidence for Sa'di's humanism than what has been cited so far. He was worse than the devil. There was not the slightest good in him and his ways. One day he watched a desert-dwelling ascetic pay homage to Jesus and was moved by the scene. He fell on his knees, broke down and repented of all the sins he had committed. The ascetic was terribly annoyed that such a sinner had approached and addressed them:

What good has come of his sinful self
>> *To wish to talk to Christ and myself ...?*
I am hurt by his unpleasant face
>> *Lest his fire will affect my case*
In the Day of Judgement, when they all gather
>> *O God keep him apart from me for ever.*

God spoke to Jesus, expressing His utter displeasure at the ascetic man's attitude. He said that the sinner had come to Him begging for forgiveness. He had not only forgiven him, but would send him to Heaven:

And if the ascetic man distains
>> *To sit with him in paradise*

Tell him not to be ashamed on the Day of Judgement
                    He will be sent to Heaven, the ascetic to Hell.[49]

And this price the proud ascetic paid for his lack of humility.

Sa'di does not advocate a totally ascetic life; or, when he does, he regards it as an ideal state achieved only by the select few, the true mystics. His advocacy of contentment does not discourage activity and effort to earn one's living, but criticises greed and obsession with material possessions, and dependency upon others for the sake of enjoying a better material life. Chapter 6 of *Bustan*, 'On Contentment', opens with the following verses:

He did not know and obey God
                    Who was not content with his lot
Let the greedy who travel the world
                    Know that contentment enriches us all …[50]

The ruler of Khotan gave an enlightened man a silk robe. He thanked the prince profusely, but added that his own coat was better:

The Amir of Khotan once did
                    Give an enlightened man a robe of silk
He laughed like rose leaves, red
                    Kissed his hand, wore the robe and said
'How nice is the gift of the shah of Khotan
                    But one's own coat is better than that …'[51]

In *Bustan*, he relates the legend of the saints and Sufis in whose hands stone turned into silver, and comments that this is not unreasonable, since for them stone was as good as silver:

In ancient days, so it has been said
                    Stone would turn into silver in the hands of saints [abdal]
Do not think this report is unreasonable
                    When you are but content, silver and stone are the same.[52]

The poem continues in the following verses:

خبر ده به درویش سلطان پرست   که سلطان ز درویش مسکین تر است …[53]

Tell the dervish who worships sultans
                    That the sultan is needier than a dervish
A drachma will satisfy the beggar's hunger
                    Fereydun owned Persia and still hungered
A great burden is the management of a realm
                    A beggar is shah, let them call him beggar
A beggar who is not bound by worries
                    Is better off than the shah who worries

The peasant and his wife sleep in their place
                    So well that the sultan cannot in his palace
Whether one is a shah or a cobbler
                    His night is still followed by day
When the flood of sleep carries you unaware
                    The ground and the sultan's bed are the same
When you see the rich full of arrogance
                    Try to thank God, O impecunious man
That you do not have the slightest power
                    To be able to hurt and injure another.

The natural inability to hurt other human beings as a gift of God is mentioned elsewhere in Sa'di's works. In Chapter 3 of *Golestan*, 'On Contentment', the story is told of two Egyptian princes, one who became ruler and the other a learned man. The one who had become ruler once spoke with contempt about the other, saying that he had inherited the realm, whereas his brother lived in poverty. The latter replied that he was grateful to God, who had given him the heritage of the prophets, i.e. learning, not that of the pharaohs, the kingdom of Egypt:

I am the ant that is trampled under foot
                    Not the wasp that makes people moan
How could I ever count the blessing
                    That I lack the force to hurt other beings?[54]

In the same chapter of *Golestan* there is the short account of an apparently personal experience:

I had never complained of life and frowned upon destiny except when I was barefoot and could not afford to have shoes. I reached the congregation mosque of Kufa, unhappy. I saw someone who did not have legs. I thanked God for his blessing and put up with being barefoot:
Roast chicken in the eyes of the well-fed
                    Is worse than leeks on the dinner spread
To he who lacks money and possessions
                    Boiled turnips look like roast chicken.[55]

And again, in the same chapter:

I saw a fat idiot, dressed in an expensive robe, riding an Arab stallion, and wearing a headdress made of fine Egyptian linen. Someone asked: 'Sa'di, what do you make of that painted silk on this ignorant beast?' I said: 'It is an ugly script written in gold ink':
An ass looking like humans
                    A calf, sounding like an ox

A fine creation is better than a thousand silk robes:

> *You cannot say this animal resembles humans*
>> *Except his cloak, turban and outward appearance*
> *Search among his things, possessions and existence*
>> *You will find nothing lawful to take but his blood.*[56]

The advocacy of contentment is not intended as encouragement of idleness or inactivity. This is pointed out in various places in both *Bustan* and *Golestan*. In the former, we read the story of how a disabled fox received his food, leading a human observer into error:

فرو مانده در لطف و صنع خدای ...[57]   یکی روبهی دید بی دست و پای

> *A person saw a handless and legless fox*
>> *And was intrigued by the greatness of God*
> *Wondering how the fox managed to live*
>> *How did it eat without hands and legs?*
> *He was deep in puzzlement that behold*
>> *A lion appeared with a jackal in its hand*
> *The lion ate of the jackal as much as it wanted*
>> *The fox ate what was left of the jackal hunted.*

Next day he saw the fox receiving its meal again in a miraculous way:

> *The man took faith in what he had seen*
>> *On the Creator he thought he must lean:*
> *'From now on I shall be content like an ant*
>> *By its own will manages not even an elephant'*
> *Head down, he stopped effort for a while*
>> *Awaiting God's donation from on high*
> *Neither friend cared for him or stranger*
>> *He became just skin on bone from hunger*
> *When he was weak and conscious no longer*
>> *He heard a voice coming from the altar*
> *'Behave like a strong lion, o rogue*
>> *Do not lie down like a crippled fox*
> *Try to leave leftovers like a lion*
>> *Why be happy with leftovers like the fox?*
> *He who has a thick neck like a lion is worse*
>> *Than a dog, if he behaves like a fallen fox*
> *Earn your living and share it with others*
>> *Instead of hoping to receive from others …'*

Jealousy and backbiting are roundly condemned in various stories and pronouncements both in *Bustan* and *Golestan*: 'Passion, greed, grudges and jealousy are / Blood in your veins and soul in your body'. In Chapter 7 of *Bustan*, Sa'di tells the following story, apparently from personal experience. It

combines in an artful way a rejection of both jealousy and backbiting within the same metaphor:

> *I was a scholar in Nezamiyeh College*
> > *Searching day and night for knowledge*
> *Once I told my master 'O wise man*
> > *Such and such friend is jealous of me'*
> *When the master of manners heard this*
> > *He was much annoyed and said 'Alas!*
> *You disapprove of your friend being jealous*
> > *What makes you think that backbiting is good?*
> *If he took the road to Hell by his meanness*
> > *You will join him via another route like this.*[58]

This is followed by another poem, forbidding backbiting even against Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the pitiless Umayyad governor of Iraq and Iran:

> *Someone said Hajjaj is a blood-sucker*
> > *His heart is as hard as a black stone*
> *He does not mind the people's sighs*
> > *O God avenge the people on him*
> *An old and experienced man at once*
> > *Gave him an experienced man's advice ...*
> *Leave him and his life alone, he said*
> > *Life will put him down instead*
> *Neither do I approve of his blood-sucking*
> > *Nor do I approve of your backbiting ...*[59]

In *Golestan* there is another story from personal experience condemning backbiting:

> I remember that in childhood I was pious, rising for prayers during the night, and eager for asceticism and abstinence. One night I was sitting with my father – God's blessing be upon him – and was awake all night holding the beloved Koran, while a group of people were sleeping around us. I told my father, 'Not one of these people rises from bed to say a prayer. They are in such deep sleep as if they are dead rather than asleep.' My father said, 'My dear boy, if you too went to sleep, it would be better than getting under the people's skin':
> *The claimant sees no-one but himself*
> > *His eyes being covered by the veil of conceit*
> *If they grant him the eye to see God*
> > *He will find no-one weaker than himself*[60]

There is in *Bustan* yet another story from childhood experience. He says that once as a boy he got the desire to fast. A pious neighbour taught him in

great detail how to wash himself ritually before fasting. He pointed out that he must clean his teeth as well, because it is not permitted during the fasting period. When he finished giving instructions, he boasted that no-one knew these rituals better than him, including the village headman who, he said, was old and redundant. The headman heard this remark, and replied: 'You said that cleaning one's teeth while fasting is not permitted. What made you think that eating the flesh of the dead [i.e. backbiting] is allowed'? There then follow these verses on the subject in general:

> *When a person's name is mentioned*
> > *Speak of him in the best possible taste*
> *When you keep saying everyone is an ass*
> > *Others will not call you a human-being, alas!*
> *Speak about me in public such that*
> > *In my own face you could say that*
> *And if you are just ashamed of saying it*
> > *In my presence, is not God always present?*
> *Are you not ashamed of yourself to be*
> > *Ashamed, not of the Almighty but of me?*[61]

The above story is followed by one about the assembly of a group of dervishes. One of them began to backbite against an absent person. Another member of the group asked him if he had ever fought the Franks in the Holy Land. He answered that he had never set foot out of his home. The other dervish expressed surprise that Infidels were immune from him but Muslims were not:

> *My good man, when a friend is gone*
> > *Two things behind his back must not be done*
> *One is to violate and waste his property*
> > *The other is to speak of him improperly*
> *He who speaks badly of others*
> > *Do not expect good from his quarters*
> *For he would say behind your back*
> > *The same as he has told you of others*
> *He is correct and wise in this world*
> > *Who minds himself, not the world …*[62]

Sa'di also teaches against informing someone of another person's negative remarks about him, thus causing a rift and animosity between them: 'Two people's fight is like a great fire / Its logs are supplied by the wretched informer':

<div dir="rtl">

ندانی فلانت چه گفت از قفا...[63]   یکی گفت با صوفیی در صفا

</div>

> *Someone told a Sufi in Safa, do you know*
> > *What so-and-so said behind your back about you?*

The Sufi said, brother it is better to be asleep
                    Than to know what one's enemy speaks
He who takes my enemy's message to me
                    Is truly a bigger enemy than the enemy
No-one would bring the word of one's enemy
                    Except he who is his partner in his enmity …
An informer helps renew an old fight again
                    For he provokes anger in a peaceful person
Try to avoid as much as possible
                    The companion who stirs up old trouble
He better be in a dungeon in shackles
                    Who brings trouble from place to place
Two people's fight is like a great fire
                    Its logs are supplied by the wretched informer.

Jealousy, as noted, is also condemned vehemently in Sa'di's works. Alongside backbiting and malicious gossip, he describes it as one of the worst human habits and sentiments. The impression is definitely abroad that, not surprisingly, the poet himself was a regular target of those who were jealous of his fame and success. In *Golestan* there is the story of a youthful courtier who was extremely bright and brilliant: 'Above his head by his intelligence / Was shining the star of highness.' The shah took a special interest in him despite his youth, 'since he was beautiful both in appearance and in reality. And as wise men have observed: Fortune arises from art, not wealth; and maturity is due to intelligence, not age':

> His colleagues became jealous of him, accused him of treason, and uselessly made every effort towards his destruction: 'What can the enemy do when a friend is kind?' The shah asked him, 'What is the cause of their enmity towards you?' He said, 'In your lordship's good fortune I made everyone happy except those jealous of me who will not be happy but by the decline of my fortune and the lord's kindness towards me:
>
> *I can try not to hurt anyone except*
>   *The jealous person who hurts himself*
> *Die, O jealous one, since this is a pain*
>   *For which except death all remedy is in vain*
> *
> *The unlucky wish and desire*
>   *That the lucky fall from power*
> *If the moth's eye cannot see the day*
>   *It is not the fault of the sun's ray*
> *A thousand eyes of that kind*
>   *Are better blind than the sun turned dark.*[64]

A similar story is told in a very long poem in Chapter 1 of *Bustan*, 'On Justice, Sound Government and Good Judgement'. A wise and experienced stranger arrives in a land and quickly wins the admiration of the shah. The shah decides to subject him to various tests over a period of time, and if he passes them make him his minister:

خردمند و پاکیزه دین بود مرد . . . [65]   ز هر نوع اخلاق او کشف کرد

> *All of his manners and morals he tested*
> > *The man was God-fearing and intelligent*
> *His morals were good, he was sound in logic*
> > *He knew everyone's worth, his speech skilled*
> *His judgement the shah found better than the notables*
> > *So he placed him above his vizier, more valuable.*

The man conducted his office well. He employed such persuasive skills that his orders did not make anyone unhappy: 'He brought a whole realm under his pen', and yet no-one had any cause to complain. The old vizier was jealous, but could not find an excuse for campaigning against him. Then he noticed the man's friendly relations with two of the shah's beautiful slaves. He accused him of being traitorous and a slave to his passion. The shah was indignant but, being a patient and deliberate ruler, he decided to try and discover the truth for himself. One day he caught the man and one of the pretty slaves exchanging a smile. Yet he did not take hasty action, but confronted the man and told him of the report of the old minister:

> *Putting his hand on his mouth, he smiled and said*
> > *He was not surprised at the vizier's claim*
> *The jealous person who sees me occupy his place*
> > *Could not be anything to me but a menace*
> *The minute he was put below my position*
> > *I knew I would be prone to sedition*
> *When the shah puts above him my standing*
> > *No wonder that he turns into my enemy*
> *Not until doomsday will he be my friend*
> > *For he sees my success as his own failure.*

The story goes on at some length, and the man explains that his years are far too advanced for any amorous adventures. His admiration of the young persons' beauty is just like that of a poor man for the rich man's splendour. He simply admires what he had had in his youth and has since lost.

In the middle of the story there is an interesting short digression on someone seeing the devil in his dream, tall and handsome. He asks him why he is totally unlike his pictures. The devil answers, because 'the brush is in the enemy's hand':

که ابلیس را دید شخصی به خواب ... ⁶⁶   ندانم کجا دیده ام در کتاب

Where I read it, I do not recall

          That in a dream someone saw the devil

Tall as a cypress tree, pretty as a gem

          Light shone from him like the sun

He went forward and showed surprise

          Saying, 'Not even angels are so nice

Since you look like the moon shining

          Why do they think that you are disgusting?

Why has the painter in the shah's court

          Painted you ugly, angry and spoilt?'

When the poor devil thus heard him

          He cried loud, wept and told him

'O happy man, I am not like that

          But the brush is in the enemy's hand.'

Finally, there is a story in Chapter 7 of *Bustan* in which, when the tale itself ends, Sa'di devotes a couple of verses to an appreciation of his own work:

فرو هشته بر عارضی دلفریب ... ⁶⁷   نقابی ست هر سطر من زین کتیب

Every line that I write is a mask

          Holding under it a beautiful face

There is meaning beneath the black letter

          Like clouded moon and veiled beloved

Dullness is not found in Sa'di's pages

          Since they hide so many beauties

Words that enlighten the surroundings

          Like fire, lighting up as well as burning

Should I be hurt when enemies palpitate ?

          because they are feverish from this Persian fire!

Having penned these verses in appreciation of his own art and his enemies' jealousy of it, he then launches into a long critique of people's fault-finding about each other. It is a little masterpiece in its own right: it is very well expressed, and it covers virtually the whole range of human action and negative reaction. It begins with verses saying that only those who shun society could be immune from the jealousy and ill-will of others. Whether a person is pious or frivolous he cannot escape the injury afflicted by other people's tongues:

به دامن در آویزدت بد گمان ... ⁶⁸   اگر بر پری چون ملک ز آسمان

Even if you fly up like an angel

          The ill-wisher will not leave you alone

It may be possible to block the Tigris River

          But you cannot shut the mouth of an ill-wisher ...

Do not think, whether you are a lion or a fox
                    That you can escape the people's tongues
If a recluse sits by himself clean
                    That on others' company he is not keen
They would call him a two-faced hypocrite
                    Shunning people like a demon freed
But if he is friendly, then alas
                    They accuse him of being lax
They skin the rich man behind his back
                    That he is the pharaoh incarnate
But when a poor man complains
                    They will call him base and wretched
And if a successful man falls from favour
                    They rejoice and thank God with fervour
Saying, 'How long can one be happy
                    After happiness you must be unhappy'
But if a man, poor and impecunious
                    Rises by good fortune to a higher status
They would bear him the poisonous grudge
                    That 'base people will have all the luck'
When they see you hardworking and honest
                    They call you greedy and materialist
And if you are not active and engaging
                    They will call you beggarly and sponging
If you speak well, you are an empty ball
                    If you are silent you are a picture on the wall
A tolerant person is not man enough:
                    The wretched man is afraid of being tough
But if he has courage and manliness
                    They shun him saying this is madness
They find fault with he who eats frugally
                    'Destined for others is his property?'
But if he ate food full of taste and goodness
                    They would call him lazy and gluttonous ...
If an ascetic does not travel around
                    They call him not a man, earth-bound:
'He who has not left his wife's embrace
                    Could not have any art, technique or grace'
But they likewise skin the traveller
                    That he is an unfortunate wanderer:
'If he was fortunate he would not
                    Be pushed from town to town'

The faultfinder blames the bachelor
> *That when he sleeps the earth shakes under*
But if he marries, the faultfinder claims
> *That his whim threw him down on his head …*
No-one could escape the censure of others
> *The remedy is just patience and forbearance.*

Concluding Remarks

Sa'di was an eclectic in the best sense of that term. He was familiar with most of the literary and intellectual frameworks of his time, but unlike most thinkers and literati he did not work solely within any of them, and so cannot be located in any given framework. He cannot be described as a rationalist, although he set high store by reason and intellect and regarded intellectual knowledge as a necessary though not sufficient means of human advancement. Nor can he be called a mystic, despite the fact that he was closely familiar with the theory and practice of Sufism and admired the legendry grand Sufis. Philosophical realism – something akin to Socratic wisdom – is perhaps the nearest modern term that may be applied to his approach to personal and social life, although he was far from a pragmatist or instrumentalist.

Judging by his works, he was a savant – a *hakim* – who advocated tolerance, moderation and good sense. He did not believe in any conception of a perfect life – only a good, clean life – and for that reason he had a relatively optimistic outlook on life, and was not too censorious of his fellow human beings: he did not promise, advocate, pray for or demand the establishment of heaven on earth, nor did he think that an imperfect world was not worth living in. It is in such broad terms that he may be compared with the Christian humanists of the Renaissance period such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, although one must be cautious in making such comparisons between cultures of different times and places.

Yet Sa'di was not just a savant, but more importantly a poet and writer. Indeed, our interest in him is mainly on that account, precisely as Rumi would not quite have attained his exceptionally high status among Islamic mystics if he had not at the same time been a poet. The impact of Sa'di's *Golestan* in Iran and Europe would appear to be out of all proportion if its basic ideas were simply put together in a few pages of plain prose.

If by 'romanticism' we mean the philosophical and literary movement that began first in Germany in the eighteenth century, later spreading to other European countries, and reached its peak in the nineteenth century, then it would be anachronistic and geographically inappropriate to apply it to the love songs of not just Sa'di but also Hafiz, Rumi and other classical Persian poets. But if the term is applied in the broader sense, reflecting mood and emotion, then Sa'di's love songs may well be compared to those of Byron, Keats, Hugo and others as part of a common human and artistic experience. But there is an

English poet of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries some of whose love poems compare to some of Sa'di's in their openness and audacity. It is John Donne, of the group known as the Metaphysical Poets who, later in life, combined his rich but not always happy love life with the deanship of St Paul's Cathedral.

Sa'di was a poet and writer of the thirteenth century and an all-time great among the Persian classics. His place as a great classic is therefore secure and universal in time and space. Yet his *Golestan* and *Bustan* contain much about timeless good and bad life that makes them relevant to any time and place where questions about moral beliefs, personal conduct and social behaviour form an important part of intellectual discourse. And he will always touch deeply any lover who reads his love poetry.

Notes:

This chapter is based on my book, *Sa'di: The Poet of Life, Love and Compassion* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

1. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di*, ed. Mohammad Ali Foroughi, rearranged by Bah al-Din Khorramshahi (Tehran: Nashr-e Arvin, 1995), p. 205.
2. Mohammad Khaza'eli, *Sharh-e Golestan* (Tehran: Ahmad Elmi, 1965).
3. John Andrew Boyle, 'The Chronology of Sa'di's Years of Travel', in R. Gramlich, ed., *Islamwissenshcftliche Abhahdlugen Friz Meier 3 am Sachzigsten Geburstag* (Weisbaden, 1974).
4. Henri Massé, *Essai sur le Poète Saadi* (Paris: Paul Geutner, 1919), transl. Gholamhoseyn Yusefi and Mohammad Hasan Mahdavi Ardebili (Tehran: Tus, 1970).
5. See Homa Katouzian: *Sa'di: The Poet of Life, Love and Compassion*, Chapter 2; Homa Katouzian, 'Safar-ha va Hazar-ha-ye Sa'di', *Iranshenasi*, Autumn 2001, reprinted in H. Katouzian, ed., *Sa'di Sha'er-e Eshq o Zendegi* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2006).
6. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), p. 350.
7. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), p. 80. This Jowzi was the grandson of Jowzi I, who for a long time was mistaken for his grandson and misled scholars in their attempts to determine Sa'di's date of birth. See Katouzian, *Sa'di*, Chapter 2. See also Abbas Eqbal Ashtiyani, 'Zaman-e tavallod va avae'l-e zendegi-ye Sa'di', in Habib Yaghama'i, ed., *Sa'di Nameh* (Tehran: Department of Education, 1937).
8. Ashtiyani, 'Zaman-e tavallod'; Sa'id Nafisi, 'Tarikh-e dorost-e dargozasht-e Sa'di', *Majelleh-ye Daneshkadeh-ye Adabiyat-e Tehran*, 1958. See also Boyle 'Chronology of Sa'di's Years of Travel'; Massé, *Essai sur la Potéte Saadi*; Khaza'eli, *Sharh-e Golestan*.
9. See Katouzian, *Sa'di*, Chapter 2.
10. See Mohammad Qazvini, 'Mamduhin-e Sa'di', in Yaghama'i, *Sa'di Nameh*.
11. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di (Bustan)*, p. 205.
12. Ibid., p. 755.
13. Turks refer to Turkish soldiers in the Mongol army, but there is a pun here, since *Tang-e Torkan* was the name of a region in Fars.
14. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di*, pp. 764–65.
15. Qazvini, 'Mamduhin-e Sa'di'.
16. See Sir Lucas White King, *Badayi: The Odes of Sheykh Muslihud-Din Sa'di of Shiraz*, edited and translated with an introduction by R. A. Nicholson (Berlin: Kaviani Art Press, 1925).
17. Rashid Yasemi, in Yaghma'i, *Sa'di Nameh*.
18. See Homa Katouzian, *Sa'di in Love*: *The Lyrics of Persia's Master Poet* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2016); Katouzian, *Sa'di the Poet of Love, Life and Compassion* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006); Katouzian, *Sa'di, Sha'er-e Eshq o Zendegi* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2006); Katouzian, *Glochin-e Sa'di, Gozideh-ye Golestan, Ghazal-ha, Bustan, Qasideh-ha* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2010).
19. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di*, pp. 560–61.
20. Ibid., p. 463.
21. Ibid., pp. 553–54.
22. Ibid., p. 604.
23. For extensive studies of Sa'di's love poetry, see Katouzian, *Sa'di in Love*, Katouzian, *Sa'di*; Katouzian, 'Ghazal-e Sa'di', *Iranshenasi*, Spring 2005; Katouzian, 'Vojuh-e Ghazal-e Sa'di, 1', *Iranshenasi*, Summer 2005; Katouzian,

'Vojuh-e Ghazal-e Sa'di, 2', *Iranshenasi*, Autumn 2005; Katouzian, 'Asheqi-ha-ye Sa'di', *Iranshenasi*, Winter 2005; Katouzian, 'Sa'di dar Shab-e Vasl', *Iranshenasi*, Spring 2006; Katouzian, 'Sa'di dar Shab-e Hejr', *Iranshenasi*, Winter 2006. All of these texts are reprinted in *Sa'di, Shae'r-e Eshq o Zendegi*.

24. See, for example, Fereshteh Davarn, *Continuity in Iranian Identity: Resilience of a Cultural Heritage* (London/New York: Routledge, 2010).

25. صورتگر دیبای چین، گو صورت رویش ببین / یا صورتی برکش چنین، یا توبه کن صورتگری.

26. Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980).

27. See, for example, Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: John Murray, 1990).

28. See also Rashid al-Din Fazlollah, *Jame' al-Tavarikh*, vol. 1, ed. Bahaman Karimi (Tehran: Eqbal, 1959); Hamdollah Mostowfi, *Tarikh-e Gozideh*, ed. Abdolhoseyn Nava'i (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1960); Abdollah ibn Fazlollah Shirazi, *Vassaf al-Hazrat*, ed. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (Vienna: Hof und Staatsdruckerei, 1856).

29. See the anecdote in *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), p. 177:

یکی یهود و مسلمان نزاع می کردند / چنانکه خنده گرفت از نزاع ایشانم ...

30. See Katouzian, *Sa'di*, Chapter 4; Katouzian, 'Baran keh dar letafat-e tab'ash khalaf nist', *Iranshenasi*, Autumn 2004, reprinted in *Sa'di Sha'er-e Eshq o Zendegi*.

31. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), pp. 267–68.

32. Ibid., pp. 268–69.

33. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), p. 105.

34. See, for example, John D. Yohannan, *The Poet Sa'di: A Persian Humanist* (Boston: Bibliotheca Persica/University Press of America, 1987).

35. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), pp. 255–56.

36. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), p. 71.

37. Ibid., p. 77.

38. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), p. 259.

39. Ibid., pp. 261–62.

40. Ibid., p. 261.

41. Ibid., p. 265.

42. Ibid., p. 271.

43. Ibid., p. 262.

44. Ibid., p. 297.

45. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), p. 94.

46. Ibid., p. 83.

47. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), pp. 306–7.

48. Ibid., p. 307.

49. Ibid., pp. 299–301.

50. Ibid., p. 333.

51. Ibid., p. 337.

52. Ibid., p. 339.

53. Ibid.

54. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), p. 99.

55. Ibid., p. 107.

56. Ibid., p. 112.

57. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), pp. 265–66.

58. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), p. 350.

59. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), p. 350.

60. Ibid., p. 74.

61. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), pp. 351–52.

62. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), p. 352.

63. Ibid., p. 353.
64. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Golestan*), p. 43.
65. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (*Bustan*), pp. 215–20.
66. Ibid., p. 218.
67. Ibid., p. 360.
68. Ibid., pp. 360–62.

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Abbreviations:

EI2: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second edition, ed. P. Bearman, T. Bianquis, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs.

EIr: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

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